

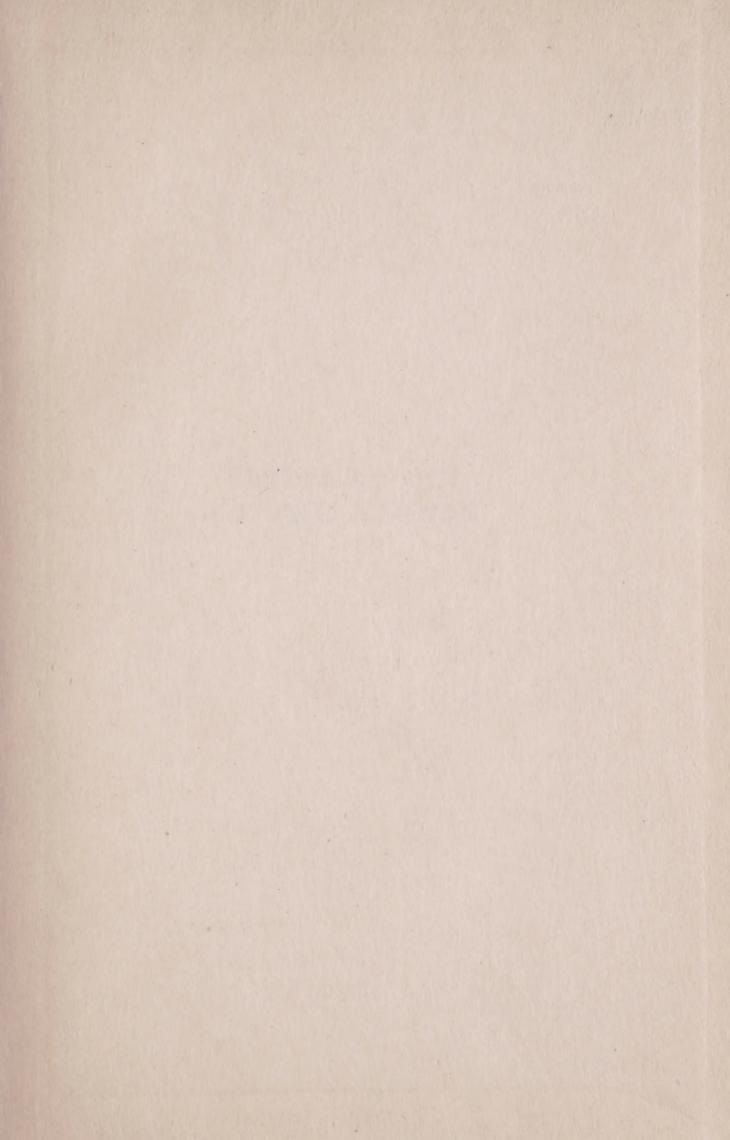


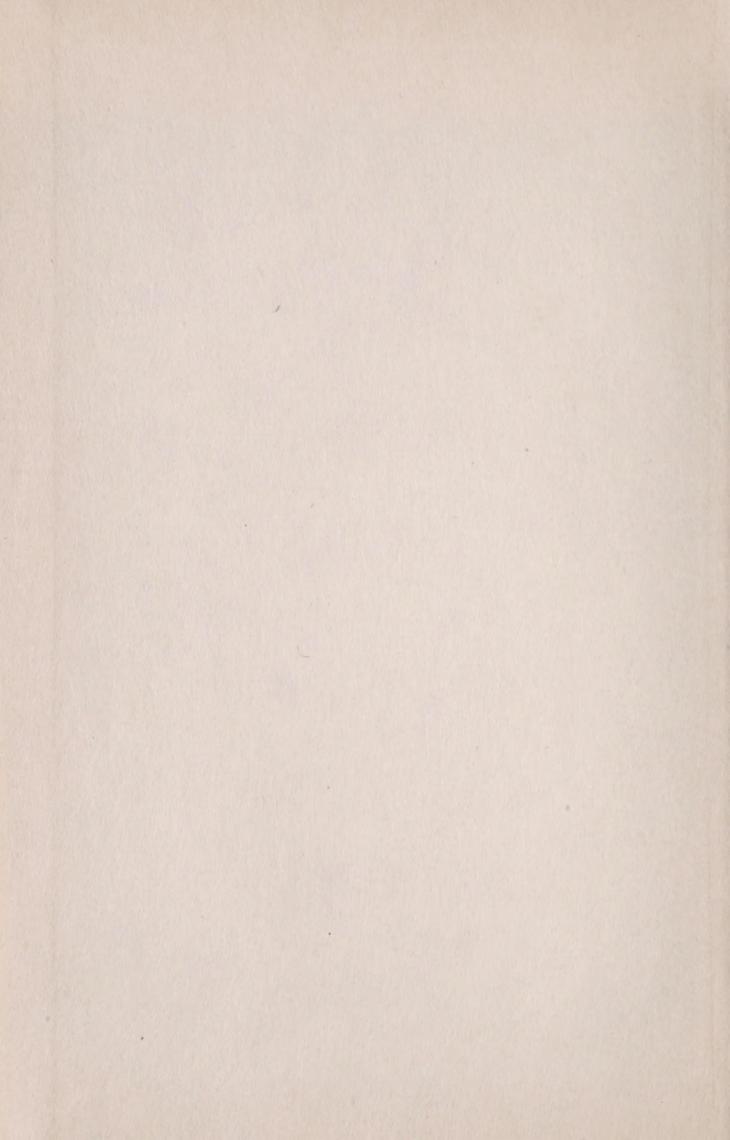
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SKIPPER JOHN OF THE *NIMBUS*



SKIPPER JOHN OF THE NIMBUS

RAYMOND McFARLAND

WITH FRONTISPIECE IN COLOR BY
ANTON OTTO FISCHER

Dew York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1918

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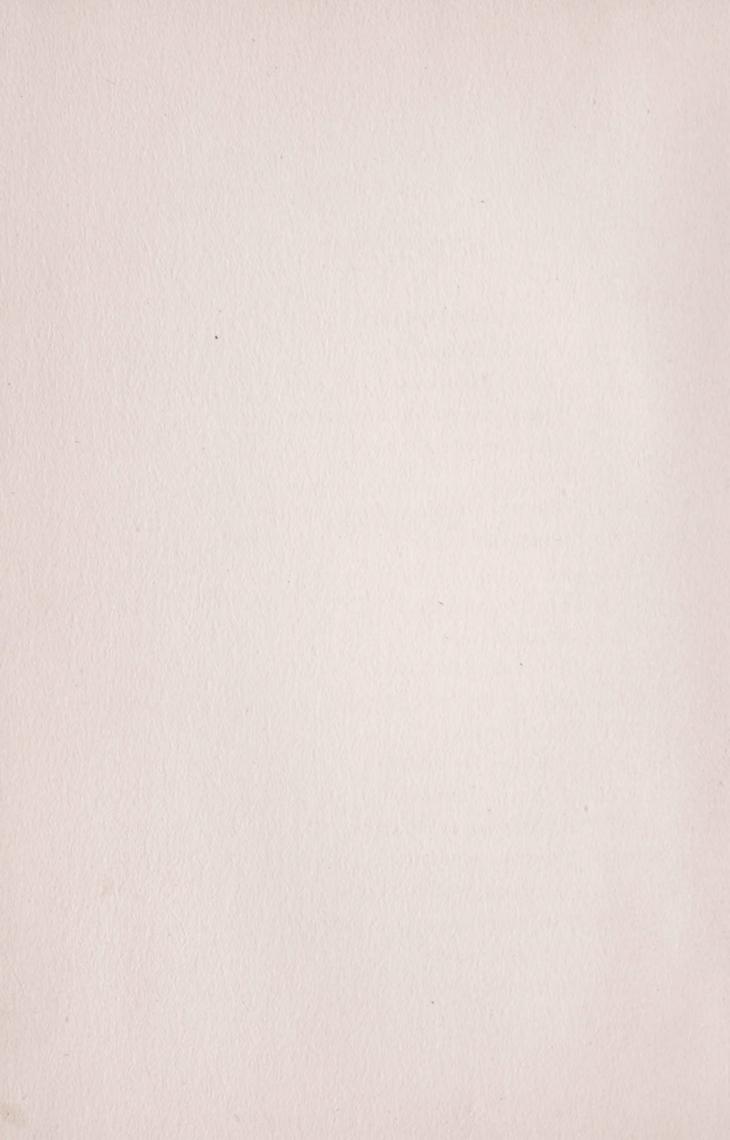
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SKIPPER JOHN OF THE NIMBUS

CHAPTER I

ALDERS AND HEMLOCK

CHOOL let out a little early on the afternoon in April from which this narrative takes its beginning. It usually did on Fridays whenever we spoke pieces instead of reciting lessons. None of us, especially the boys, had a particular fondness for speaking pieces; yet the day was always looked forward to with a certain amount of eagerness in the hope that we might be dismissed a half-hour early. We boys had arranged our part of the afternoon's program with deliberation; it must have been a genial shock that the teacher experienced as one after another of the boys, usually so reluctant to mount the platform and always ill at ease, spoke his piece with zest and accuracy. be sure the pieces were short but they passed muster without question.

I started up the road in great glee, swinging my dinner pail and Monteith's "Comprehensive" through the air to balance me as I ran. My destination was John Deane's woodpile. Now it must be admitted at the outset that woodpiles are never attractive to young boys while spring is growing or to growing boys while spring is young, old or middle-aged. So you will have guessed

1

rightly that John Deane, not his woodpile, was the object of my hustling. Where the woodpile was, there John Deane could be found until the wood was sawed,

split and piled in regulation tiers.

Even at that the boy's job is not finished. Firewood stands around in the way like a swollen conscience, eternally reminding some one of its presence; you are never proud of it, still it must receive due consideration and your final wish is that there were no such things as consciences to become distended or woodpiles to receive attention. The woodpile remains constant through every change of spring. Fences have to be mended and fields plowed; yet the wood pile ever remains in statu quo to be the sandwich between hours at the fence and days

behind the plow.

Even after the boy gets the pile tiered up like library stacks, so high and wide and long, buttressed at each end with a cob-pile, there is no end to the matter. In the midst of the having season a dull day comes to prevent work in the fields. Stick by stick the wood is laid in the wheel-barrow until both barrow and boy groan under the load. It requires no small degree of skill to wheel the load up the long plank into the woodshed. So many times, too, the plank is the scene of disaster, for the long-suffering barrow decides to jettison its deck cargo which falls off in the path of the barrow and blocks further progress. The boy, with more persistence than good judgment learned from experience, backs the barrow down the plank, gets a fresh start and plunges the load into the midst of the débris, with the result that all the front row sticks which act as a key to the stability of the load, fall off and let the remaining sticks come rattling down over the handles of the barrow.

Hardly is the woodpile laid horizontal in the funereal cavity of the woodshed than it has to be ferreted out for use in the kitchen stove. This time it is "hand picked"

from the pile and carried in great armfuls to the woodbox, that mysterious hole in the wall that is always empty, however often it may be filled. At night the box is heaped to overflowing; in the morning an empty box opens wide in Moloch ravenousness for a fresh supply of victims to be sacrificed in an endeavor to boil the recalcitrant kettle. So there's an end of the wood, any-

way!

By no means. The life history of firewood is not completed with the dying embers that flicker a long time before giving up the ghost. The ashes of firewood—and we have to admit that they serve a more utilitarian purpose than our own—after dropping through the grate are taken up and treasured in the ash-barrel in the back shed until some pleasant morning in May. Then the good housewife, assisted always by the omnipresent boy, pours scalding water down through the barrel of ashes. The water is touched by the last bit of life that the ash contains and trickles through the spigot as amber lye; the lye, in turn, to be used in making the family soap for a twelve-month, except part of the last run, which is saved for hulled corn.

Trees, logs, firewood, ashes and soap! From dust to dirt again. What object of nature ever went through so many changes and processes or, in every single metamorphosis, came so intimately into contact with the daily life of the boy? What wonder that youth has rebelled against the use of soap since its invention! It is a racial instinct on the boy's part asserting itself from one generation to the next. Where the woodpile is, there the boy may be found, not from choice but because in the course of time every adult expects every boy to do his duty. This accounts for John Deane's apparent faithfulness to the Nemesis of boyhood. Attending to the woodpile in some form or other had been John Deane's mission in life so long that he could not

remember when there was not firewood to be chopped or

sawed or piled up or lugged into the house.

This was John Deane's place in life at the opening of our narrative. He was only five years old when his parents attempted to cross the narrows at Pretty Marsh. Their boat was capsized in a squall and although rescuers were prompt in reaching the scene of the disaster only the boy was saved. Since that day he had lived with his uncle, Captain Seth Hinds, now retired from the sea. The captain was a rough man whose early life had been filled with hardship. He still possessed at the noonday of life great bodily strength and vigor and was impatient that the rising generation should be growing up in easier paths than his had been. He carried on a thriving fishing business in Comberton with capital that he had saved from his struggles with the sea; although some of his neighbors were bold to suggest that the captain's money had received no small accretions from crafty eluding of the customs officials when his vessel would return from voyages to the West Indies or South America. Nobody ever accused him of being kind hearted to the boy, or doubted that the balance of the account between him and the boy, now going on ten years, was in favor of John Deane.

The boy had had no childhood. He had received little enough attention during the years of his residence in the household of his uncle. He had been permitted to attend the winter term of district school, where he proved an apt pupil. Yet even this boon was denied him after his fourteenth birthday, since his time was too valuable to be wasted inside the schoolhouse. So he had reached his fifteenth year with muscles hardened before their time, and of unusual size and strength for a lad of his

years.

Long before I reached the woodpile I could hear him splitting wood. I caught occasional gleams of his ax

as it flashed above the woodpile and hung in midair a moment before he drove it into a stick of wood with a resounding plock. He was surrounded by wood in various stages of manufacture — logs of sled-wood length untouched as yet by the saw and still firmly imbedded in ice and snow at the bottom of the pile; heaps of round sticks piled in a semi-circle and awaiting the time of their dismemberment by the remorseless ax; and the freshly split firewood that had been flung back against the shed out of the way of the worker.

"Hello, John," I cried, suddenly appearing from behind the larger pile of wood; "what are you doing?"

John rested his ax against his foot and pushed back

his cap before replying.

"What do you think, David? Does it look as if I was peeling apples?" He answered as if he was in a half-way mood from his absorption in the work to a

happier fate of chatting with me.

"It looks as if I was splitting wood, doesn't it?" he resumed. "Well, I am and I am not. When you think about the thing you are doing, it is work; and when you do the thing you want to it is more like play; but when you do one thing and think about another you don't know in the end whether you have been working or thinking. I've split wood all day with my hands and done something else with my head. They can make a boy split wood but they can't tell what he will think about all the time."

As he paused for a moment I took the ax from his hand to relieve him at splitting, for I knew too well that the inmates of the Hinds' household would expect to hear saw or ax going much of the time. John sat down against the big pile of wood.

I split several sticks in silence, not knowing just what was proper for me to say. I understood John Deane's case probably as no other person in Comberton did; it

seemed pitiable to me, as indeed it was. I did venture to hearten him by suggesting that he got a good bit of

work done for a boy of his age.

"You bet I do," he responded quickly. "I know what 'birch tea' is when he serves it. Do you know how I manage to do so much work? No? Well, it's spite. Spite, do you hear? I don't do it for love of him or her or anything about the old ranch. When I saw up a log of wood it is somebody with a dozen heads that I'm sawing off and kicking in the face as they fall off the horse into the sawdust. Almost every stick I split I'm smashing in somebody's skull and wondering what kind of looking brains they've got inside. Sometimes it's him, sometimes it's A'nt Abbie. I don't believe it is a good thing for a boy to be thinking about such things."

He mopped the sweat from his forehead before taking the ax out of my hand to resume his splitting. From time to time he paused in his work to talk with me.

"An't Abbie is bad enough but in a different way from him. I'd rather take two of his lickings than one of her tongue-lashings. He just riles you up and makes you feel like fighting him when you get growed up. She makes you feel small and mean and no-account, and she keeps it up all day long when she gets started. Lickings hurt pretty much but they don't last long; the jawing hurts something inside of you that won't heal up quick."

He stopped for a moment to gaze at the ground as if his mind was running over sore places that had not been healed. I held my counsel but I was sure my companion knew that he had a sympathetic listener; as a matter of fact he had still another of whom neither of us was aware, one who was not sympathetic, however.

"Some days she is as good as pie to me," he resumed. "When I go up in the porch chamber at night and crawl into my strawbed I just have to cry, I'm so

happy that she has been good to me or unhappy that it won't last long, I never know which. He never does anything like that. No, sir! He's the same all the time only worse, watching to see if he can get more work out of me or get a chance to beat me. And all the time he keeps flinging out how he used to work when he was a boy."

I held my peace. When the heart speaks out it is useless for the head to attempt reply. John went on, tapping with his ax-handle upon different sticks of wood as he spoke.

"Firewood is a good deal like men and women, David. Some is good for one thing, some for another, and some no good at all. Here's the maple, straight and fine to make ax-handles and pudding-sticks out of, the same as some folks are square and good to you and useful about the home. There's a yellow-birch. It is tough but good for whiffle-trees and sled-bunks and runners though it looks rough on the outside; makes me think of some sea-capta'ns who have had lots of knocks in the world but are not too nice to help other folks. Fir! Why, that reminds me of these meeting-house folks at the Corner. When they're cool they are all right, but let them warm up a little and the pitch sticks all over you so you have to use kerosene and soft soap to get it off."

He paused and lowered his voice before proceeding further. "Alders is like A'nt Abbie, crooked and small and all over the lot. They are never straight like other wood and you can't get them to do what you want; but they make a fine blaze, hot as huldy while it lasts and gone out in five minutes. Alders grow where other wood won't and you cut them out of the pasture so the cows will have a better chance to feed. Folks don't usually cut them for firewood, they are such a nuisance," and he emphasized his disgust by picking up a crooked alder stick and flinging it over the woodpile. It struck, mak-

ing a big commotion for so little a stick, but the significance of the noise did not occur to me until the next afternoon.

"As for hemlock," he said, slashing the ax spitefully into a big knotty stick, "that's him, big and knotty and bristling all over with needles to stick into you. As crossgrained as a bear; you try to split it when it is frosty and like as not it will snap a piece out of your ax blade; try it when the wood is warm and the ax will stick in so hard you cannot drive it out with a clout of wood.

"Ever notice a hemlock board?" he inquired, straightening up. "Usually it is the widest in the whole pile, pretending to be good lumber; but it is the meanest, shakiest slab that ever came from a sawmill. They use hemlock bark for tanning leather, you know. Well, that's his game exactly, using himself to tan my hide. The way to handle hemlock sticks is to hit them right in the middle of a knot, for the knots reach down into the heart of the stick. Alders is mean enough, but hemlock is grandfather to meanness.

"Alders and hemlock! That's what I call these folks. They make me think of Sam Austin's oxen, each one blind in the eye next his mate. They look out for themselves with their well eye and when they are yoked up they sort of sidle along to each other as they

go - and both of them are ugly enough."

I had to laugh out loud as he finished his tirade on wood and people. My sudden outburst of laughing and the freeing of his mind of thoughts over which he had been brooding during the day set him in a better humor. We fell to discussing other matters and I had a chance to mention the subject for which I had come for an interview.

"I suppose you are going to the launching to-morrow?" I inquired nervously, fearing he would declare his inability to attend that important event in Comberton's

history.

"That's so, it is to-morrow, sure enough. I hadn't given it much thought. Don't see how I can go very well. I'll have my stent to do and even if I got it done

they wouldn't let me off for a half day."

"Oh, that'll be all right," I hastened to reassure him. "I'll come over and help you in the morning and we can slip away all right after dinner. The sun doesn't set until half past six, anyway. We're sure to be back from launching by four. Plenty of time for us to finish the pile after that."

"Yes, but how will I manage with the folks?" he ventured, pondering the question a while before replying. "It will be Saturday and I guess he'll be too busy at the store to keep track of me. A'nt Abbie never bothers me out here unless the woodbox gets empty. I'll load

it to the muzzle in the morning."

Thus we planned for the future, innocently and without misgivings. A quarter-day holiday meant big things to John Deane. As the results proved it meant

more than either of us had imagined.

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD DREAMS

O activity of Comberton interested me so much as the shipbuilding. Every one of the Comberton fleet was hand-made, like Comberton wharves and houses and warm woolen frocks that menfolks wore in cold weather. In these later days shipbuilding is a rarer industry along the Maine waterfront. Forty years ago, however, when the American merchant marine consisted of wooden ships, manned by men of iron, the metallic click of the oakum mallet could be heard resounding from a hundred bays and inlets of the coast. Ships that were to engage in merchant marine service were constructed in the larger shipyards. The deep-sea fishing fleet for the most part consisted of two-masted schooners ranging in tonnage from seventy to a hundred tons.

The fishing boats, which included all craft below twenty tons, afforded abundant opportunity for the novice to try his skill in design and workmanship. Often a crude boat would be built during the winter months in barn or shed and hauled to the water's edge in the early spring by a dozen yokes of oxen. It was a day for the whole community, the day of the hauling bee, participated in by the men with their beasts of burden and by the women with their contributions of doughnuts and hot coffee; in the evening the owner of the boat would give a party at his home. They were slow days, those oxen days, but they were mostly unspoiled ones.

It is an interesting game to watch the building of a

ship. You see huge timbers laid straight and true for the keel; ribs, carved and curved by the adz and broad ax, fitted securely in place and fairly welded to the keel under the terrific blows of iron sledges; the oak planking, warm and pliant from its steam bath, spiked to the curving ribs; the fantastically carved hackmatack "knees" used for inner braces; the planking of the hold that is destined to conceal the lurking place of that most distressing marine product, bilge-water; the stem and stern-posts set in place, standing for a time alone like totem poles until they are finally joined to one another by indissoluble bands "so long as the ship shall live"; braces, deck timbers, planks and rails all welded together and held firmly in place by long wooden pins or stout iron spikes. Of such stuff is the body of the ship made, out in the open sunlight where all may view her daily growth and witness the strength of her parts.

Still the ship is not complete. Like a new statute, it is useless without its proper seal and official sanction. Oakum and hot tar put the seal of durability upon the new hull,— oakum that is driven into every crack and crevice under the merciless blows of the long-headed mallets, tar that is poured boiling hot upon the oakum to keep it in place and protect it from the water; this is the official seal of the shipbuilder's art. Afterwards come masts and spars and sails and cordage and paint, all important and necessary to the equipment of a sailing craft. But the hull is the ship, the other parts are accessories; when the hull is finished, even before it is wrapped in the swaddling clothes of spars and sails and cordage, it is time for the ship to be born.

No boy with red blood in his veins will miss a launching if he can help it. It was only a few minutes past one o'clock when John Deane and I, all out of breath from running, came to a halt under the bow of the new

schooner. My forenoon had been divided between duties at home and part fulfillment of my promise to help him finish his daily stint at the woodpile. When the noon hour arrived we had come to the conclusion, with youth's alluring confidence in our own judgment, that the small pile of wood left unfinished could be split in the later afternoon.

"Ain't she a dandy!" exclaimed the excited boy, fondly running his hand over the curving bow. "This is the lower bobstay," he continued, touching the new steel rope that was firmly imbedded in the lower part of the stem, "and that is the cutwater."

Little did I realize then that the time would come when I would thank my lucky stars for this same bobstay and cutwater. Fortunately it is not revealed to youth which way the wheels of destiny will turn. A glorious time we had that afternoon going over the hull of the schooner almost literally foot by foot. The workmen were still busily engaged in preparing her for the launching; but two spry boys are not in the way of workmen very long at a time.

We followed the water-line from stem to stern, noting especially the sharp bow that was then leading up to the "toothpick" type of schooner later developed at the Essex yards. John knew much more about hulls and ships than I had supposed a boy of his age could. He had been a keen observer and an interested listener in Comberton for a decade. Later in the afternoon I learned why he was especially interested in shipbuilding.

When we reached the schooner's stern a happy surprise awaited us. Under the taffrail had been painted in white letters the name of the schooner and her port, "Nimbus — Comberton." We fell to conjecturing what the name meant and where we had heard it used before.

"It sounds familiar and I almost have it on the tip

of my tongue," said John, at length. "Oh, I have it! Don't you remember in the physical geography where it tells about storms and clouds? Nimbus is a cloud. Mr. Littlefield had us study about the different kinds and tell what the weather would be to-morrow. Nimbus! That's the storm cloud, David. Look out for a storm to-morrow."

He ended with a sweep of his arm toward the blue of the western sky. It did not look the least bit stormy to either of us, although there was a "lee-set" in the atmosphere of which neither of us had a suspicion.

We clambered aboard the vessel and delved into every cranny and corner we could find. Then is the time to see a ship, while it is still fresh from the hands of the ship-carpenters, while heaps of curly shavings are lying about, the woodwork is unstained either by paint or dirt, the berths and lockers are empty, and the long "run" near the rudder-post invites one to explore its mysterious recesses before cordage and rigging and fishing tackle effectually block the passage. The great, echoing hold is a grand playhouse, with sloping sides for walls; the cook's Tom Thumb quarters become a boy's camp of the Robinson Crusoe type; and the wide, triangular berth way up in the bow of the schooner, with the weird dead-eye thrusting its sharp point down through the deck planking and watching you suspiciously from every angle you may turn, is Captain Kidd's secret cavern where his ill-gotten treasures are concealed. We kicked the white shavings about the poop, we climbed over the cabin and fore-castle houses, pumped the windlass arms up and down, made a circuit of the decks by walking the rail, shinned out to the tip of the bowsprit only to return by the swaying footropes, and ended our sport by taking charge of the wheel and directing the Nimbus in an imaginary voyage to Le Have bank.

Afterwards there was time to explore the shipyard. We first fortified ourselves with huge pieces of tar from the barrel in the storehouse, broke off pieces of the luscious blackness and, after filling our mouths, stuffed our pockets with chunks of the same. We had the greatest fun down by the water's edge, for the tide, a neap tide that had been selected for the launching of the schooner, was near the height of the flood. We skipped flat stones on the water and counted our accumulated wealth, each "skip" representing a dollar. On occasion a stone would scale upward instead of striking the water; after a long sweep through the air it would turn downward again and "cut an egg" as it cleaved the water without making a splash. Sometimes a rock would skip until the wealth of circles mounted to twelve or fifteen, each of which would enlarge and overrun neighboring circles until the maze of circles and lunes created a plethora of wealth in our fertile imagination.

We were called from the excitement of this sport by the bustle of people near the Nimbus. Already a crowd of men and larger boys was aboard the schooner. The props and posts had been removed from either side and the vessel rested upon its cradle. The heavy timbers upon which the cradle rested had been swabbed with grease to help the schooner slip more easily into the water, once she had been raised from her bed. When all was in readiness the workmen took their stations with long-handled mallets in hand to drive the wedges under the ship and start her down the ways. At a command from the boss-carpenter a dozen hammers swung in the air and struck the wedges under the framework. The blows fell quickly and with force. Slowly the vessel responded to the effort. The hull gave a tremor as if waking to life and, while every breath in the crowd was momentarily held, the new Nimbus started slowly down

the ways to the waters that were straining higher every moment to meet their bride.

"There she goes! She's off!" exclaimed some overanxious person in the crowd. The workmen upon seeing the tremor of the hull and hearing the cry from the crowd ceased their efforts with the mallets and ran from under the hull. It was a false start. Not two feet did the schooner move before she came to a dead stop. Another cry came from the excited throng. "She's stuck! She's stuck on the ways!" And the more superstitious gazed anxiously and fearfully upon the black hull that loomed between earth and sky but was destined for neither place.

The boss-carpenter shouted for the workmen to continue their work, to stand under until the schooner was in the water. Once more the sledges resounded from under the keel, the swabbers spread grease more liberally upon the ways and, in the excitement of the moment, eager men braced their shoulders against the stem and shoved with the strength of Samsons against the unyielding wall of wood. Their combined efforts were not in vain. The hull again started; it moved down the plane faster and faster until it had gained a

momentum that no force could stop.

It was a pretty launching, as they always are. The back-wash of the wave came far up the beach to wet the feet of the too venturesome and caused a ripple of laughter that dispelled the moment of gloom which had settled upon the on-lookers when the Nimbus had stuck on the ways. Fifty yards from the shore the port anchor was released and, as it sank into the river, splashed water for the first time upon the cat-heads of the Nimbus,— that port anchor about which we shall learn interesting details later.

The crowd on deck rushed from rail to rail rocking

the vessel as children rock a boat. Down she went on the port side and hung there for a time even after a part of the crowd had scrambled up the steep deck to the opposite rail. Down in turn upon the starboard side, and again the same unwillingness to right herself

quickly.

"See how she rocks! She's got a big list when she goes down," exclaimed an old sea-captain near whom we were standing. "She sets up in the water fine. What a high bow she has got and see how that stick"—indicating the bowsprit—"is poked out forward. But I don't like the way she stays down by the scuppers; looks as if she would need a pile of ballast in her hold to keep her on an even keel in a gale of wind."

"It don't matter much, my 'pinion, how she sails," commented an old fisherman near by. "No ship ever got stuck on the ways at the launching but went down to Davy Jones' locker mighty soon after she got out to sea, 's I remember things. Recollect how the Alice Cole stuck on the ways and was wrecked on Seal Island first trip to the banks? I don't want no part of ships as

sticks on the ways."

We were too deeply interested in the fun that the men and boys on the Nimbus were having to be disturbed by the lugubrious comments of the old salt. The ship was there in the stream, the very newest thing in the world at that moment. We were drawn toward her because we had had to plan carefully to be present at the launching. In fact, we felt a sort of ownership in the craft, for we knew no other schooner so intimately or favorably as our experiences of the afternoon had made it possible for us to know the Nimbus. When you have invested time and interest in an object you will stand up for it even in the face of incriminating evidence against the object of your affection. That is how we felt toward the new schooner; we stood up for the Nim-

bus when she was launched; it was our fortune to stand by her together through many vicissitudes later; and when finally the angry seas broke her back on the Nova Scotia ledges we two were the last to leave her deck.

It was not until the crowd began to dwindle that we were reminded of the necessity of hurrying back to the woodpile. Four o'clock had come and gone while the Nimbus was rocking in the tide as the crowd rushed from starboard to port. We reluctantly turned our backs upon the schooner and hastened up through the flake-yards with heads down and arms swinging as we walked. We were startled out of the reverie into which each of us had fallen after leaving the exciting picture behind us by a woman's voice calling from the cookhouse doorway, "David Graham, are you getting too good to speak to your old friends?"

It was "Aunt" Susan Condon, the cook of the shipyard, one of the friends of our family. We stopped and before either had time to say anything she went on, "Why don't you come over here and tell me about the launching? That's where you have been, isn't it? Perhaps I can scare up a doughnut or two for a couple

of hungry boys."

"Want to?" said I, turning to John Deane, anxious to go but not willing to admit that the going would be

as a result of my own decision.

"It's pretty late now, isn't it?" John commented half heartedly and in a way that betokened interest in "Aunt" Susan's doughnut jar.

"'Twon't take but a minute and we'll feel better if we rest a little while before tackling the woodpile," I

answered.

True to her promise the good woman found a plate of doughnuts,— the big, twisted kind made with molasses instead of sugar for sweetening. She also brought out a pitcher of milk and some hot biscuit and butter. I

was rather provoked at John Deane. He acted as if he did not care whether he ate or not, while I knew that he did. Probably his reticence was due to his not being so well acquainted with "Aunt" Susan as I was. After dint of coaxing and suggesting on her part she got us seated at the table.

"Now you can tell us about the launching," she said, as each of us seized a biscuit from the plate and gave it temporary preferment over the tar. While I doled out our afternoon's experiences to her between bites of hot biscuit, John Deane remained silent except as I turned to him occasionally for a nod to corroborate my narrative. "Aunt" Susan sat opposite, listening to my story as she kept the biscuit and butter close in front of us.

"Why don't you have some butter on your biscuit?"

she inquired of John.

"I don't eat butter with hot biscuit," John replied, as if surprised at sight of my prodigality in its use.

"Don't eat butter on hot biscuit!" the good woman exclaimed. "Why, that's the making of them. What do you eat on them?"

"Pork-fat on bread; but I don't eat biscuits much

anyway," answered the boy.

"Don't they have butter up to your house? They don't eat pork-fat on everything, do they?"

"They have butter sometimes at their table," he added, reluctantly, and meaning his uncle and aunt.

"Don't you eat with them?" inquired "Aunt" Susan, interested and curious about the living habits of

the Hinds family.

"No'm, I eat off the kitchen shelf."

"And don't they let you eat with them ever?"

"No'm, except when he's away. Then A'nt Abbie lets me eat with her."

"Do you have butter then?"

"No'm, they never give me butter. Usually I don't get hot biscuit. They say bread is better for growing boys. I suppose that's why I'm so big for my age," he volunteered good naturedly, anxious to put things in the most favorable light.

"Try some butter on these biscuit anyway," insisted the good woman, pushing the butter plate over to him. "I guess you are being brought up under man-of-war rules. Good for discipline, perhaps, but not attractive to growing boys. I've had boys of my own and know

that all boys are pretty much the same."

She filled us to the brim with her good things. Even after we protested that we could eat no more she put a couple of twisted doughnuts in our hands when we started away from the cook-house door. Fortunate woman, to know what boys want most and have a heart big enough to fulfill the want! It did not matter so much now what might happen to us, we were fortified with a good luncheon. John Deane was happy in having had a human being take an interest in him, an occurrence that had been rare for many years in the Hinds' household.

On the brow of the ridge we paused to look back before losing sight of the shipyard and wharves for the day. John Deane stood in silence watching the scene of the afternoon's activities. Many things had occurred in the few hours by the river's edge. The dreams of boyhood that had been slumbering for years and unrevealed to others since nobody appeared to have an appreciative ear, pushed hard to the forefront, especially under "Aunt" Susan's shrewd questioning and hearty interest. For a time we looked in silence; then, without turning, he disclosed his secret thoughts.

"That's what I want, David, ships and wharves and a chance to make something of myself. I'd like to go to the Grand Banks and work like real men and some day

be "high-liner" of the Harvest Home. Perhaps I could be cap'n in time and sail a vessel where I wanted to, off to the West Indies and Spain and Newfoundland. I'm going to, if I live. I'm not going to slave all my life for Seth Hinds. I'm going to be cap'n and beat his cap'ns and come in with the biggest fare ever Comberton has seen. David, this has been the happiest day of my life."

But a day does not end until after sundown.

CHAPTER III

FROSTY HEMLOCK

T still lacked an hour of sunset. We felt sure, as we hastened along the road, that we could easily finish the day's stint of work before dark. It did not occur to us to return to the woodpile under covert of the fence and barnyard as we had gotten away. Captain Hinds was always at the store at this time of day and John's Aunt Abbie rarely bothered herself with affairs outside her kitchen. So we continued up the road to the driveway and headed for the woodpile back of the barn.

We had nearly reached the corner of the barn when the door opened suddenly and Seth Hinds stepped into view. In his right hand he held a yellow-birch switch four feet in length and as thick through as a man's finger. He did not speak, simply raised his left arm toward us and crooked his forefinger ominously back and forth. John Deane took a deep breath as he turned silently away from me toward the man. The two disappeared in the barn, the door was shut and I stood excluded from a scene which, my feelings told me, would be enacted without sympathy from behind closed doors.

There was a half-window at the back of the barn placed about five feet up to let light into the barn-floor. In a twinkling I had scooted around the barn and taken my station at the window, carefully and with only an edge of my face exposed, for the window let in a flood of sunset light and I would be discovered easily

if one looked toward the window.

Inside was the familiar scene I had known from the first rainy day John Deane and I had played together. There was the ground-mow at my left, now well emptied of its winter's store; the family wagon stood gray with mud in the middle of the floor back by the big doors; an open sheep-pen was at my right and farther along closed stalls for the family horse and cow; ladders stood on either side of the floor upon which we had practiced "going aloft" so many times; and a pitchfork, always placed next the ladder, stood against the stall. It was the usual ship-shape orderliness to be found on the premises of a sea-captain.

John Deane stood in the center of the floor facing the window at the back of the barn. He had already taken off his thick woolen frock and thrown it upon the dashboard of the wagon behind him. On his left and sideways to me Seth Hinds had taken his stand, his jaws shut grimly, his legs apart as if he were on a quarter-deck in a gale of wind, and in his hand the yellow-birch

stiff and straight as a rapier.

"So ye will run away to a lanchin', will ye?" he began. "I'll learn you one sweet lesson, my boy, that you can't buy at any store," and he brought the stick down across John Deane's back and shoulders with resounding whacks.

"Take that!"

He gave the boy a vicious cut across the legs that made him wince with the pain. Beyond buckling forward with his knees the boy made no sign or sound. From my station at the window I could see his face set hard and his eyes flash defiance; but he gave his uncle no look or word.

"Do it again, will ye?"

No response came either to the question or the blows that followed it.

"Answer me, or I'll tan yer hide like they tan hemlock

bark, 's ye tell about," and the brute laid the blows on harder and faster than before.

John stood helpless, in great pain, all the vim of resistance taken out of his body by the repeated blows. Even his face had changed, for his jaw relaxed and began to tremble nervously. Yet he made no reply nor did he protest against the merciless beating he was receiving.

"I am frosty hemlock, am I?" continued the infuriated man. "Frosty hemlock! I'll hemlock you so't you'll let me and lanchin's alone after this, you ungrateful wretch."

He was as good as his word and as bad as his looks. The birch whistled through the air and fell with unceasing cruelty upon the quivering back and legs of the boy. Tears came into the lad's eyes and dropped unchecked to the threshing-floor at his feet, not tears of repentance but of hopelessness that no hand or voice in all the world was raised to help him.

At first I was afraid. I trembled all over as I witnessed my friend's punishment. As the brutality continued and the man became white with passion, horror seized me. I dared not stir even from the window for fear of attracting his attention and having his anger spend itself on me.

"Speak up," he yelled, seizing hold of the boy's shoulder and shaking him. "Speak up, or I'll whale it out of ye. Do it again or won't ye?"

John was trembling from head to foot and every blow drove light from his eyes. Seth Hinds was heartless. He had been a hard master at sea. It was an unusual experience for him to be denied what he demanded of those over whom he had authority. He could easily have knocked the boy senseless with a blow of the fist but that would not have accomplished the ends he sought.

"Oh, I heard ye runnin' me down and yer A'nt Abbie

that feeds ye," he continued as he raised the stick on high again. "Who else would 'a' taken ye in these past ten years, ye thankless dog! You're no good anyway, and none of yer folks was before ye." He paused again to let the words sink into the boy's understanding. "They never 'mounted to nothin' and you never will either."

By this time the terror that had held me gave place to resentment and rage. The man had been sneaking behind the woodpile the afternoon before and had overheard all that John Deane had said when he spoke out his pent-up feelings. Then he had purposely allowed the boy to get away to the launching that he might give him a whipping upon his return. One thing a boy cannot stand is a sneak, whether he be big or little. I stood flushed with rage, a helpless witness of the brutality before my eyes.

The yellow-birch was again in the air and I could hear the blows fall heavily as the beast continued: "Launchin' the Nimbus, was ye? I'll print Nimbus on yer hide so't you'll remember her while she floats. There's the N." As he said these words he cut three sharp strokes one after the other that would easily have left the print of the letter N on the boy's back but for

the red welts already there.

"N-I-M" the blows fell unceasingly. John Deane made no response; he suffered intense pain; his eyes were closed, his hands clenched, his body swayed

unsteadily back and forth.

In my rage everything looked black to me. But when the creature began to stencil-plate the letters on John's back with the birch the blackness burst into a red flame of fury. The David Graham whom I had known suddenly forsook me. The next thing I knew I had rushed around the barn and burst through the door. A raging demon and furies over whom I had no control possessed me.

"Don't you hit him again, you coward!" I cried, rushing up and seizing his uplifted arm. "Why don't

you take somebody your size?"

I could well have meant myself. At the moment nothing in the world seemed impossible to me. For an instant Seth Hinds was taken back with surprise. His arm never gave the blow that he had intended for my friend. He turned upon me savagely and swung me backwards off my feet as he turned. I fell in a heap, my head striking against the horse-stall. Before I could rise or get out of his way he struck me across the legs and back with blows that stung like hot irons.

"You impudent brat! I'll learn ye to mind yer own business," he hissed at me. But he did not get far with

his instruction.

When I fell I knocked over the fork that stood against the stall. As I scrambled to my feet one of the demons within me put the fork in my hands. I'm sure of that, for I have no remembrance in those exciting moments when details were printed indelibly on my mind of consciously taking the fork. When I got on my feet there it was clutched firmly in both my hands. In another moment I was rushing at Seth Hinds as wild as a Turk. I jabbed at him viciously, struck him, poked him and swung at him with the dangerous weapon. He tried at first to get hold of the pitch-fork; but I hit down with the weapon and one of the sharp tines grated deeply across his hand with a scratch that he never lost. leaped backward, throwing up his hands to parry a thrust at his face. The fork tines went through each hand and came back streaked with blood when I yanked the fork away.

My demon pressed me on and I pressed Seth Hinds,

He dodged and retreated but always emerged from every encounter with fresh scratches and punctures. I drove him to the back of the barn and cornered him by the sheep-pen, prodding him furiously as he retreated. Neither spoke a word. He was helpless with rage, I was speechless. I had him in a tight place. Probably the tough sea-captain never had a more uncomfortable moment on board his ship, where he was accustomed to be master even if belaying-pins and broken heads were forthcoming to secure the mastery. Now he was being routed in his own barn by a thirteen-year-old, routed ignominiously and in imminent danger every moment of having a fork tine unceremoniously jabbed into his vitals by an infuriated boy whose rage knew neither check nor discretion. He was alongside the sheep-pen which was boarded off the barn-floor by a rail about a yard high. Suddenly as he parried a blow with his left hand he placed his right on the board rail and leaped quickly into the pen. I did not follow him there. As he went over the board I gave him a jab that brought yells out He tumbled into the pen and scrambled on all fours out of the reach of my weapon. I turned to John He was still standing in the middle of the floor, his eyes wide open in horror at what I was doing.

"Get out of here quick," I said, seizing him by the

arm, and starting to turn him toward the door.

"Look out, David!" he exclaimed, for his eyes were

still fixed fearfully upon his uncle.

It was fortunate for me that he was alert to the danger behind us. I turned just in time to see Seth Hinds stepping quietly over the low boards, a three-tined fork in his hands and such a look on his face as I never expect to see again on a human. Blood was streaming from his hands and face and, I knew only too well, from his body and legs also. He looked the demon that he was, although I have to confess that much of the

"local color" of this human sieve was the result of my own handiwork.

"You young hellyun!" he bellowed, lowering his weapon and leaping toward me. "I'll spear yer black heart on these tines, else my name ain't Seth Hinds."

The interesting part of what followed was that I turned to meet him, eager to get at him again. My demons surely were suffering no relapse. As I have since thought about the event I have been unable to account for my conduct. Up to this period of my life I had lived quietly as most boys do, never an aggressor, never picking a quarrel or avoiding a healthy one that was pressed upon me. To change in a twinkling from a sedate schoolboy to a raging Turk was an occurrence beyond my experience or knowledge. When I had turned to John Deane I was plain David Graham; when I again faced Seth Hinds I became Demon Turk.

The duel did not last long. Although I met the captain half-way and with an equally stout heart, I had neither the strength nor skill nor reach of arm to stand up before his onslaughts for long. He charged, I retreated; he lunged and I leaped to one side; he whirled about and tried to get me by an upward thrust, but my fork met his and the tines of the two caught together. With a quick jerk and twist he yanked his fork upward, wrenching my weapon from my hands. It flew across the floor and landed near the door, far out of my reach.

I leaped backward out of his way. My heel caught upon a plank and I half fell against the low mow of hay, my feet away in front of me, my shoulders back on the hay, and both my arms thrown up and back against the mow to keep me from falling backwards. I was in a sorry plight. Never could I have assumed a more satisfactory position for the spearing process than had suddenly befallen me. My whole front was rounded out towards the creature before me, exposed and undefended.

For an instant only Seth Hinds hesitated. Then conscious that in another moment I would recover my balance, he leaped forward to pin me to the mow. I did not see the fork tines at all, fortunately for me, since they were below my range of vision. I saw only his face,— the bloody streaks, the white eyes under fierce brows, the mop of hair fallen over his forehead. It was not pleasant to see that rushing toward me.

Then something happened. There was a flash through the air; diagonally across the face before me there came a white welt as if the flesh had been seared from a bolt of lightning. Seth Hinds dropped the murderous fork; he pressed two bloody hands hard against his face, a face like a scarlet shield, with a white streak

dividing it from left to right.

"O God!" he cried, doubling over and still pressing hard against his face. "Oh — oh — h!"

"Quick, David," I heard John Deane say.

He stood holding the yellow-birch stick in his hand, his face white, an eager look in his eyes. We hurried to the door, where my foot struck against the fork handle. When I got outside I found the fork again in my hands, but I could have sworn I did not stoop to pick it off the floor. The last I saw inside the barn was the outline of the man swaying to and fro, his teeth set hard, his hands to his face, and heard the agonized tones, the long drawn out "Oh — h!" of the "frosty hemlock" whom John Deane had cracked with a single blow.

We started up the road toward my father's house. I tried to put my arm about my companion to steady him, for he was woefully weak. The pressure against his back was too much for him to bear. He leaned heavily on my shoulder while I held his arm as we moved along.

My mother met us at the door. She suspected that something unusual had happened as she saw us approaching, John still holding the yellow-birch in his hand, pale

and trembling and leaning on me, I bearing a bloody tined pitch-fork and looking as I am sure my mother never saw me look.

Without a word we passed into the kitchen, where I assisted John to a chair that mother brought up. He sat down unsteadily, his arms fell helpless to his sides, his head sank forward and before either of us knew what was happening he pitched forward to the floor in a dead faint. Mother helped me place him on the sofa. Then, without attempting to restore him to consciousness, I unfastened his woolen shirt and lifted it off his back. My poor mother gave one agonized look, then fled to the back door and called excitedly for my father.

When father came in and beheld the pitiful object on the couch he exclaimed in horror, "Who did that?" I could only point to the quivering flesh and mumble "Cap'n Hinds' work" before I burst into tears that

blinded me from the terrible sight.

CHAPTER IV

THE WHARVES OF COMBERTON

OMBERTON, the town of my nativity, was a thriving fishing port while I was passing through the most impressionable years of my life. Its southern front rests lightly on the waters of a landlocked bay, since the Maine coast here is low, which makes the adjacent waters shallow and unsuited to navigation. An inlet of the bay forms the western boundary of the town and separates the ambitious little port from the less pretentious farming community opposite. Long ago the inlet was named the Latona river, though for what reason the oldest inhabitant of the place is unable to state or to explain why the stream of water is called a river at all, since it is evident to the most careless observer that the inlet serves more as a means for daily invasions of the sea than as an outlet of fresh waters.

Tidewater extends up the river a distance of two miles. Twice daily the outrushing tides strip the river clean of everything down to the slimy eelgrass and rockweed of its channel. Then dangerous looking rocks and ledges protrude and mussel-beds at the mouth of the river are uncovered just enough to warn mariners to steer their craft well toward the west shore when seeking to enter the river. With the return of the tides the river resumes a state of safety and respectability. On these occasions it drinks deeply off the lid of the sea until its swollen sides roll against the adjacent banks and re-

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store life to the wharves which, during the ebb tide, have

hung helpless on their high pilings.

Here, on the eastern shore of the river, the ancient fisheries of Comberton were carried on. At four places along the water front groups of wharves were built by the fishermen of the town. The wharves of Comberton became famous far out of proportion to their size or any beauty they may have had when they were first constructed. Wharves at best are ugly things; if they have any attractiveness at all it is due to their setting or associations. This was the case with the wharves of the Latona river. They had been roughly built from spruce logs piled and cross-piled together, then weighted down by heaps of muddy rocks, after which the whole structure was flanked on three sides by rows of pilings driven deep into the mud of the river bottom. Ice and tides had worn them gray. Colonies of barnacles had climbed up the pilings as far as high-water mark, there to be supplanted by a green slime that needed only an occasional splash of salt water to prolong its useless life.

To the people of Comberton these rough doorsteps to the sea held real attractiveness. They were legacies from a former generation, heirlooms of an industry and foresight that the most indifferent citizen could ill afford to neglect. The wharves were Comberton's outlet to the world. Its name was known in Cadiz and Surinam, wherever Grand Bank cod and Magdalene herring were shipped, known for a quality of flavor not to be found in codfish and herring cured elsewhere in the western ports of the Atlantic. The first fishermen of Comberton never practiced sham. They were content to let the products of their wharves be their own advertisement and thus the fame of Comberton wharves and dories had spread into three continents.

In my boyhood, fishermen of the third generation were pursuing the industry of the sea at the very wharves their grandsires had built. They continued to label their products with the same stencil—"Cured in Comberton"—that had been in use before those stirring days when Comberton pinkies, with their sounding-leads melted into cannon balls, sailed forth as privateers in the War of 1812 to drive the British merchant marine

from the high seas.

Thus it became a part of the business creed of Comberton fishermen to respect the institutions and practices of their fathers. As their industry enlarged they aimed jealously to live up to the reputation that had preceded them in the maritime marts of the world. They were ambitious; yet, like the average New Englander, a subconscious conservatism always marked their newest ventures. Whenever it became necessary to replace a decaying timber of the wharf by a sound piece there still could be seen upon its weathered face, like the royal record written upon an Assyrian slab, the work of a grandsire whose steady hand had hewn close to the line with the great broadax. If the central pile of rocks had to be overhauled, as was necessary sometimes in rebuilding the wharves, the later generation would speculate over the loads of stones as they worked, wondering from whose field they had been taken out, or what yokes of oxen had dragged them to the shore on yellow-birch drags; and some one, the unconscious Hamlet of the crowd, would weigh a heavy stone in his hand and suggest that it might well have served Silas Young for a base-ball - so well had tradition recorded the size of that ancient worthy's hand and the prowess of his arm.

The sharp barnacles that found lodgment on the lower parts of the wharves gave little concern to the fishermen. Life first began in the sea, it will ever be the province of the sea to support life, Comberton knew that only too well. The annular growth of the crustaceans had been more than matched during the years by an annual in-

crease in the prosperity of the townspeople. True it was that ice and tides had conspired to wear away at the fronts of the wharves; but the damage was slight in a season and to be passed over lightly when contrasted with the wealth of codfish and herring that men had seen their fathers hoist from the holds of schooners long since lost at sea.

There were times when the head of a wharf would be littered with logs and timbers piled in the disorder of joggle-sticks - stems and sternposts, ribs, knees, spars and deck timbers thrown down in apparent confusion. Always, however, the magic hand of the boss ship-carpenter had brought order out of confusion until a day came when a new schooner, or a pinky, grown to full stature in its cradle, glided from the ways to find life in the nearby waters and, childlike, to splash the old wharf with its baptismal waves. Tradition recorded many tales of ships that had stuck on the ways while being launched and always doomed them to the ill luck of broken voyages or an early grave. And later generations, mindful of the place where the ill-fated ship had stuck, would prudently avoid building other craft upon the unlucky spot.

During the winter months work about the wharves was slack; then the people of Comberton had time to pay fitting tribute to workmen of a former day. But in early spring during the rush of activities that preceded the sailing of the herring fleet for the Magdalenes, speculation gave place to vigorous work. The wharves were still of the present, if from the past. They still groaned with cargoes and codfish and herring, still swarmed with men and boys employed in curing, packing and shipping the products of Comberton dories. The wharves were Comberton, the forum of activity where the male populace gathered at early dawn and remained until evening set in. It was from them that the ambitious youth of

the town, aspiring always to the command of a grand-banker, embarked upon the eventful first deep-sea voyage. From them the captains of the day in the flush of noontime prosperity sailed forth to seek the treasures of the deep, hoping as they passed beyond the bend of the river to make a record voyage. On pleasant days the gray generation, whose life currents already had set strongly in the ebb, were wont to gather here to keep in touch with the throbbing life of the community, to run a withered hand over fresh kenches of cod and, dreamy eyed, to listen for the hundredth time to the story of how Hance Joy had made a record run from Amherst Isle when the old *Morning Glory* was queen of the Comberton fleet.

This was the Comberton of my youth. Then strong men, the Jacobs of the fishing fleet, went forth to wrestle the season through against the storms and fogs of Le Have and Grand Bank. They were men of an iron generation. Forty years have wrought great changes along the Maine coast. Wharves and fishermen have wellnigh disappeared before the irresistible invasion of summer folk — an invasion of new breeds and blood, a race of flit and shine in summer only. When the cold days come on and a silver fringe of ice binds the rugged shore the coast is deserted of its bright crowd. The old inhabitant remains a while longer; the ancient wharves, landmarks of former virility, scarcely bear up through succeeding winters; while the eternal ice and tides tear ruthlessly at the coast as they have done since the retreating Ice Sheet left the deeply scarred shores bare and unfertile, and as they used to tear when the iron generation of my boyhood dared to defy their terrors through every season.

In the last, best days of Comberton there was being reared one who would outrival the fame of the long list of sea-kings who had helped carry her products to the borders of distant seas. Two generations of fishermen contributed their skill and enterprise in making her products world famous; the third and last generation was contributing that highest product of all times and places, a noble man.

CHAPTER V

A DAY OF BARGAINS

HE struggle at the barn stirred Comberton as no other event ever had done. For two weeks John Deane lay sick and delirious in our front room. While the young fellow was hanging between life and death the neighbors were most kind. They called at the house by the dozens. As the story got about town and the people realized that it had been all but a tragedy they made the affair their own. Every evening there were men or women to watch by the boy's side during the night. The resentment against Seth Hinds amounted to a passion; fortunately for him he, too, was confined to his home or the citizens would have dealt with him harshly.

My father questioned me sharply about the punishment that John Deane had received at the hands of his uncle. I gave him the details of our experiences up to the time of my entrance into the barn; after that I became less definite, for I felt some shame at my unseemly conduct with the pitchfork. Also, I omitted telling him of the unhappy moment when I was lying back against the haymow and the terrible creature was rushing at me with pitchfork in hand. Later I overheard him recounting the tale to my mother. He had been wonderstruck at my feat and daring. "Why, Ellen," he told her, "there isn't an able-bodied man in town who would have faced Captain Hinds so pluckily when he is in one of his

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mad spells. I don't understand it, for I didn't believe

it was in the boy."

It was hard to believe. Yet there was the evidence: my own story, the frightful condition of John Deane's back, the yellow-birch stick, and the bloody-tined fork. Furthermore, the condition of Captain Hinds was corroborative evidence that a fierce struggle had taken place in the barn. Only the doctor saw him for a fortnight. When my father called at his house the Sunday following the launching Mrs. Hinds, who met him at the door, told him rather curtly that "the cap'n wasn't seein'

callers to-day."

In a single afternoon I had become a personage of distinction. Wherever I went people would ply me with questions about the scrape. My father had warned me to talk little about the affair, so I held my peace entirely. This made me more of a hero than ever. Surely, people said, a boy who could put Seth Hinds to rout had some stuff in him. People whom I met took pains to speak to me with a respect that bordered on deference; when I would pass by they would gaze at me as if I were a great curiosity. They could not understand what there was about me that should make me so formidable an antagonist. My wonderful feat at arms was noised abroad in neighboring towns and I became known everywhere as "Pitchfork" Graham. I had not told my parents or anybody else about the demons that came to me that eventful afternoon. I was not sure that the fighting Turks were not still lurking invisible in my system and, like the germs of a disease, were waiting for a favorable opportunity to spring to life.

It was not long before my worst fears regarding the indwelling demons were corroborated by an incident at the wharves. A month after the launching of the Nimbus John Deane and I once more stood upon her decks. He was still pale and haggard from his recent illness.

It was our first appearance together since John was able to be about and, as a consequence, we attracted not a little attention. Even Captain Ober, of the Nimbus, became interested in us and took pains to show us about his new schooner. After we had made a circuit of the schooner the captain turned away from us to direct the work of his crew who were at work preparing the schooner for the long Grand Bank trip. We were standing near the main-rigging when suddenly Seth Hinds appeared from around a corner of the smokehouse on the wharf. As soon as he caught sight of my companion he strode across the wharf in our direction, looking straight and fiercely at John.

I watched his movements closely. There was a kind of revolting satisfaction that I had at sight of the long red welt across his face and the pit marks made by my fork punctures flanking the scar above and below. He was the same unsympathetic, hard-hearted being that he had ever been; no sign of pity came into his looks at sight of the pale face below him on the deck of the

Nimbus.

"So you're out again, are ye?" he exclaimed, menacingly. "Well, you can just mosey right back home instead of loafing around these wharves."

John did not look up at him; instead he fixed his gaze across the top of the wharf to the vessels beyond. His silence irritated the captain, whose underlying trait was always to get what he wanted and get it in a hurry.

"Do you hear me, I say? Get back to the woodpile where yer place is. An' the quicker ye go the healthier

it'll be for ye."

Everybody aboard the schooner had stopped his work intent only upon watching Seth Hinds and wondering what John Deane would do. Even Captain Ober, who had started down the companionway, turned back and took a position near us with one hand hold of the main-

rigging. With a steady voice and in a tone that I had never heard John Deane use, a voice so greatly in contrast with the high-pitched nervous tone he had used when speaking of his uncle at the woodpile, he answered the man, "Seth Hinds, I'm through with you. You can go right straight to — to where you belong!" And he thrust out his chin and looked him square in the eyes as

he spoke.

The nervous tension that was holding us broke suddenly with these brave words. "Good for you!" "That's the stuff!" and other encouraging words came from the crew at our back. The captain was undaunted by the chorus of fishermen's voices raised against him. The prospect of an encounter with them did not deter him in the least. He was irritated at finding the boy in another man's schooner. John Deane's defiant reply in the presence of a score of people angered him, too, but the interference of the crew in a matter that was his business and, as he looked at it, his only, roused him to a fury. He strode to the edge of the wharf, leaned over and shook his fist at the boy not four feet from his face.

"You will come up here," he shouted, red in the face, and you'll come now. Climb up on this wharf quick

or else I'll come down there and throw you up!"

It is not at all likely that either Captain Ober or the crew would have allowed Seth Hinds to lay a hand on John Deane. Some of them were only too eager to measure their strength against his. He could easily have handled two or three of the crew successfully, but he would have been worsted in the end. But there was no need for the crew to interfere. When Hinds stooped over and shook his fist in the pale face at my side anger filled me to the brim. I turned about for means of defense. Near by on the main-hatch were a half-dozen short-tined forks such as are used in the deep-sea fisheries for pitching codfish from the dories to the schoon-

er's deck. Demons again! I grabbed up one of the forks eagerly and took my station by John Deane's side.

"Come right down, Mr. Hinds," I cried spitefully, "come right down. Take him now or leave him for-ever!" As I snapped the words out I held the fork up threateningly in the position of charge bayonets against horses.

The crew shouted in derision. They jeered at the captain and encouraged my saucy attitude. They were all very brave men now that somebody had paved the way. Captain Ober, quick to see that his crew should not bear-bait another captain and uncertain what I might take it into my senseless head to do next, laid his hand on John's shoulder.

"Come down to the cabin, John," he said, "I want to have a talk with you." Then turning to me, "That will

do for now, David. Come along with us."

Half-reluctantly I followed the two into the cabin, but I took good pains to let Captain Hinds see that the fork went along with me. John and I nervously took seats on the port locker, every once in a while glancing up through the companionway in an apprehensive way lest our enemy should surprise us in an unexpected attack. But he went on his way after we had disappeared in the cabin.

Captain Ober took his stand in the middle of the cabin opposite John. He lost no time in taking up the subject about which he wished to consult with John. "How would you like to go to the banks with me this summer, John?" he began. "I can find a place for you all right and will give you a half-share. You'll have a comfortable berth and wholesome food, anyway, with a few dollars all your own when we get back. I'll venture you have not had too many of them so far in your life."

Had John been informed that he was sole heir to a

fortune he would not have been more pleased or surprised. This was the opportunity of his life, just what he had longed for through many weary years. To go to sea, to go in the new Nimbus, to have Captain Ober for skipper, that was a combination of happy possibilities that his wildest imagination had not pictured. On the other hand, to be free forever from the woodpile, free from jawings and whippings, free from "alders and hemlock," from daily "stents" and pork fat, this put a gilt edge to every new page of life which was suddenly opening before him. Without a moment's hesitation John replied, "I'd like to go with you first rate, sir."

So it was agreed. He was given the starboard berth in the cabin way up next "the run" where he would be out of the older men's way. He would do odd jobs about the schooner — cut bait, help to cook, save cods' tongues and livers, tend ship when the crew were in their dories trawling and make himself generally useful in other ways. He would have a chance to learn the ropes, to see how codfish are caught and dressed, and get a taste of fisherman's life aboard a grand-banker.

We started homeward in high glee at John's good fortune. When we reached the knoll above the cook-house we instinctively halted and turned about. Below were the gray buildings and wharves of Comberton, the tall birches on the river bank just opening into a new life, the stately ships on the river standing erect at the insistence of mistress tide, and men hustling to and fro as they got ships and goods ready for the long grand-bank trip. Back of all were the dark spruce woods on the horizon and, in the sky, the glorious red glow of a sunset that betokened healthy weather ahead.

For some moments we stood in silence before John Deane exclaimed as he raised his arm toward the commanding scene, "Just think, David, a month ago to-day I was a slave. To-day I'm free, free, and I'll show him that I can amount to something, too."

A change was fast coming over my companion, one of those swift transformations which occur when a climax of events does in a twinkling what years of ordinary development may not accomplish. It was a change from the weakness and uncertainty of early boyhood to the independent, bone-and-muscle stage of young manhood. From that day a new John Deane began to assert himself. From that time the tremendous will of his that drove his body and mind to accomplish the seemingly impossible began to show itself; thenceforth it gave John Deane no rest, no vacation; it proved master of the lad and maker of the man, inexorable amidst trials that would have broken other men, unceasing and inflexible in the countless activities of a vigorous calling, and remorseless in holding John Deane to the attainment of his ideal.

At the supper table that night I fidgeted a long time before I could announce properly the news that John had shipped as one of the crew of the Nimbus. I poured a generous helping of molasses on my plate, bisected one of the hot biscuits, cut checkerboard squares on its soft parts and began mopping up the molasses with the biscuit. When I had a mouthful of the biscuit I began to lead up to the subject, every once in a while looking over to John for corroboration of my narrative.

"We've been down seeing the Nimbus this afternoon," I ventured at last. The news produced no effect upon my parents, who continued to eat hot biscuits undis-

turbed by my conversation.

"Captain Ober showed us all over the schooner -

didn't he, John?"

John nodded and answered with a faint "Uh-huh." Still no parental interest. I took a piece of strip-fish from the plate and bit into it vigorously.

"Captain Hinds wanted John to go back —" I began again. Father paused in drinking his tea, held the cup in his hand and interrupted me with, "Where did you see Captain Hinds?"

"Down't the wharf," I answered, glad at last to have

gained the attention of royalty.

"What was he doing? You say he wanted John to

go back, - back where?"

"Back to his home," I said. "He said to John if you don't come up here I'll come down there and throw you up."

My father put down his cup in disgust at my indefi-

niteness, as he probably had cause to be.

"Come down where? And throw him up where?"

he inquired, laying stress on the words.

"Down on the deck of the Nimbus. We was there," I went on, warming up to my subject, "and he was on the wharf and he shook his fist in John's face and said if you don't come up here quick I'll come down there and throw you up."

"Well?" said father, waiting for the rest of the story. I had entered into details as much I cared, so replied, "Cap'n Ober told John he could go to the

Grand Banks with him this summer."

Both father and mother were surprised at the news. They exchanged glances, then looked toward John. Father inquired, "Is that so, John?" John quite misunderstood the meaning of father's question, who wished corroboration of the fact that he had shipped for the banks. John understood him to refer to the sequence of events after Captain Hinds threatened him. He felt more pride in my stand against the captain than I did, for I preferred not to let my father know of my second recourse to pitchforks. So John answered very innocently, "That isn't exactly what happened, sir."

Father leaned over toward him. "Now, John," he

insisted, "you tell us just what happened down there. What were you boys doing, anyway, and what did Captain Hinds do?"

"It's like what David has told," John replied, "ex-

cepting about the pitchfork -"

My father turned to me in disgust. "Pitchfork! David Graham, have you been using pitchforks on Cap-

tain Hinds again?"

In a flash I saw two answers to my father's question. I had not used forks on Captain Hinds, for I had only one in my hands. Nor had I used a fork on him, mostly because I did not get a chance. I pulled away at the piece of strip-fish desperately while I was framing the most diplomatic reply. The piece was uncomfortably small, since I needed a whole cured pollock in front of my face just then.

Father turned again to John. "How is it, John?

Speak up. Did David use a pitchfork?"

Poor John, frightened at the prospect of getting his defender into trouble and too honest to deny the ques-

tion, simply nodded his head.

"Go out into the woodshed and wait for me there!" father said sternly, pointing in the direction of the door. I knew the way well enough without any paternal arm acting as guide-board. I went quickly, silently and with grave misgivings about the red sunset predicting fair weather. Few grown-ups knew my father so intimately as I did; possibly his father had. Ours was a very intimate relationship. No demons, big or little, came to visit me as they had during the encounters with the seacaptain. I was left alone with David Graham, quite alone with David, the schoolboy. He and I knew what would happen in a few minutes and where it would happen, too.

The minutes dragged slowly by, so slowly. I remained in the shed a long time. Within I could hear

the hum of voices,—father and mother but most of the time John talking. But I could not make out any of their conversation. After a time the talking ceased and mother opened the door.

"Come in, David, and finish your supper," she said

quietly.

I finished my meal in silence. Once I glanced up at mother and noticed that she had been crying. I ate slowly, with all three looking on and myself not knowing just what would happen when I had finished my supper. Finally father pushed back his chair from the table and leaned forward toward me, resting his hands on his knees.

"David," he began, earnestly, "we are proud of you." I glanced at him approvingly. This was unlooked-for news. "John has told us what happened to-day and of your part in it. He has told us a great deal more that happened in the barn which you forgot to mention to me. You are a brave boy and I'm never going to punish you again so long as I live. But I want you to promise that you'll never use a pitchfork again."

"I'll do it," said I in a flash, only too glad to bind a bargain like that. Father patted me on the shoulder as he went out by my chair into the woodshed. Neither of the others said anything, except that mother put her

apron to her face and I knew what that meant.

After we got to bed that night John told me how astounded my parents were at the narrow escape from death I had had at the hands of Captain Hinds in the barn — for this part of the narrative I had omitted when telling father of the barn scrape. From that day John Deane became quite a different personage in our household. My parents adopted him into their hearts as another son and I approved the adoption.

The sequel of the day's events, so far as I was concerned, did not occur until the following July. It was

a steaming hot day in haying time. There was a heap of work to be done as always happens in the hayfield. We were drawing in hay and I had the boy's job of raking scatterings after the cart, a most uninspiring occupation for man or boy. Father, who always did have a knack of discovering thunder storms hours before they would appear above the western woods, scented a big one in the offing.

"Here, David," he called, "there's a big one coming. Stick your rake in the hind end of the cart and climb up and stow hay on the load. Henry," he called to the hired man on the load, "you come down and help me load hay on the rack; the scatterings can wait."

In the face of two possible storms I leaned carelessly on my rake handle and replied, "Father, last May I promised you I'd never use a pitchfork again. I'm going to keep my promise and you've got to keep yours."

Then I resumed my raking with more zest for scatterings than I had ever before thought possible.

CHAPTER VI

KIDNAPED

T was a happy task that confronted us boys to get John properly equipped for his first Grand Bank There was nothing that he could furnish himself but his present need was hardly to be considered with the members of his new household supplying his wants most willingly. When we came in one afternoon we were not a little surprised that mother had the dining table piled high with a supply of necessary clothing,—a pair of blankets, two old comforters, several pairs of home-spun woolen socks, a supply of mittens, a pair of wristers, flannel shirts and one of father's old Shortly after, father came in and added to overcoats. the pile a pair of rubber boots, two sets of oil-skins, a can of oil and a sou'wester,—the fighting helmet of the grand-banker.

My contribution to John's outfit was a ditty-box, an indispensable part of a sailor's equipment. It was a box a foot long and half as high, fitted with a tiny lock and key, and prized beyond all other of my possessions. For half a dozen years it had done service in my room holding my dearest treasures, always securely locked with the key hidden in a secret place where father and

mother would be unable to find it.

"Why, David," my mother exclaimed, laughing to see me bring in the prized box like an offering at a sacrifice, "you're not going to give away your precious box, are you? How will you keep your treasures locked up now?"

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I replied that the box was only loaned to John, that on board ship he would need something in which to lock up his valuables and I was willing to let him take the box

along for that purpose.

John's valuables! Little did I realize then that John's shirt and trousers were the alpha and omega of his valuables, neither of which could be locked up in a box without distressing the owner. Unknown to mother, however, I had placed some of my knick-knacks in the box which made the inside look less lonesome than it did after I had removed my treasures and concealed them under the attic eaves.

On another day we set forth for the wharf with bedding, clothing and other equipment piled high on the wheel-barrow. John led the way, pushing the barrow's load before him, happy and serene. I closed up the rear with only a pair of legs showing beneath the enshrouding straw-bed on my back which was to furnish comfort in John's berth aboard the Nimbus. our arrival at the schooner the crew gave us a warm greeting, for they were only too glad to have John

among their number.

After we had made up John's berth it presented an attractive appearance. It was well laid with bulging straw-tick, comforters and blankets. One comforter, bearing the hall-marks of an early New England type of needlework, served as a coverlet. At the head was a pillow filled with ducks' feathers and covered, thanks to mother's thoughtfulness, with a pink-and-white slip. A sailor's bag rested at the foot of the berth, rotund with its inner store of warm clothing. The walls and ceiling of the retreat were painted white. A narrow shelf extended the length of the back wall on which we placed the ditty-box, that sanctum sanctorum of seamen which, in this instance, contained a small mirror and comb, a cake of perfumed soap, a knife and a jew's harp, all contributed from my treasured store. Standing alongside these nautical *Penates* and no less esteemed by John Deane was a small collection of books that we had gotten together to help pass away time when the storms of the banks should prevent work in the dories.

Thursday was the date set for the sailing of the Nimbus. This day had been decided upon partly to avoid sailing on Friday, which is regarded by fishermen as an omen of bad luck, and also to go in company with the Harvest Home, a Comberton grand-banker

owned by Seth Hinds due to sail on that day.

On the eve of the sailing of the Nimbus father did not go up to the store as was his custom. We all sat about the dining-room table, father reading from the paper, mother knitting stockings and we boys industriously learning how to box the compass. One thought was uppermost in our minds, that on the morrow John Deane would sail for the Grand Bank of Newfoundland to be gone three or four months. Although I regretted losing his company I was happy that he was free from Hinds and his woodpile, free to fight his own battles, free to make his way in the world and free to become a man six years before his majority. Little did we realize that evening what price he would have to pay for the larger freedom or how grandly he would meet the dangers and difficulties that awaited him.

We were interrupted in our occupations by the sound of footsteps on the walk outside. The door opened and a stranger stood on the threshold. Father hardly had time to say "Come in" before the stranger inquired in a tone more brusque than polite, "Does John Deane

live here?"

John rose from his chair at mention of his name. The man continued without further introduction, "The cap'n wants you down to the wharf right off; he is going to sail on this tide. The schooner is out in

the channel now waiting for you and two other fellows."

The announcement surprised us so completely that none could say a word for a minute or so. Twelve hours' difference in the sailing schedule of the Nimbus would not affect any of us greatly, especially as most of it would be spent in slumber; it was the suddenness of the change of plans that caused our surprise. Father was the first to recover his wits.

"Why, I thought he wasn't to sail until the morning. I was talking with Captain Ober this noon and he said nothing about sailing to-night. I don't see how he can anyway, I never heard tell of sailing out of the

river at night."

For answer the stranger shrugged his shoulders as if to throw off responsibility for the change of plans. There was nothing to do but accept the case as it stood. John already had taken his coat off the back of his chair and was putting it on. He had nothing to carry, since all his goods were aboard the schooner. He stood in silence before us, fumbling with the buttons on his coat. He wanted to say something to father and mother about their kindness to him but a big lump of something had lodged in his throat which prevented his speaking.

Father came to his rescue quickly. Men have such an easy way of saying good-by, an offhand "so long" as if they had no real interest in the matter. "Well, good luck to you, John. We hope you'll return the high-liner of the crew," and father shook hands with him heartily as he spoke. Mother was not so successful in imparting her good wishes; between the three of us, however, we instinctively got John headed out of the house. I took up my cap from the hall rack and

followed the two into the night.

The stranger, noticing that I was about to follow,

said rather petulantly, "You don't need to come along. I can get the boy to the schooner all right. Good night." I persisted, however, and father called after me, "Where are you going, David?"

"Down to the shore with John," I answered.

"Don't go aboard the schooner to-night. Come back as soon as John gets aboard. Be sure you don't run away with him."

"Why, Hiram, what do you mean?" mother exclaimed, not quite sure whether father was serious or

otherwise.

"I mean that I don't want him to skedaddle with John. No telling what he won't do once he gets a notion into his head."

"I'll come right back," I called to them as we swung out into the road. But I did not return that night.

We hurried along in the darkness of the night. The moon had not risen enough to make our walking in the deep ruts of the road any too safe. As we came into the head of the field above the wharf where our destination was the stranger turned to me and said, "Now, sonny, you can run back. I can get John the rest of the way without your help. We'll go right aboard the schooner so there's little use in your going farther."

No boy likes to be called "sonny." I was now determined to go as far as I could and replied, "I'm going to the wharf and see him off." I could not understand why the man was anxious to be rid of me. The man stopped, hoping that I would also. But John and I kept right on toward the wharf. At this the

stranger hurried on ahead of us.

When we reached the wharf we could barely make out the outline of a schooner in the channel. The sound of voices came across the water and we could hear the crew at work hoisting the sails. Our guide had disappeared. We heard him shortly at the end of the wharf where he had got aboard a dory which he was holding to the wharf.

"Halloo, on board the schooner," he called out.

"Halloo!"

Promptly out of the river mist came a reply, "Halloo, on the shore. Everything all right?"

"All right. Coming aboard!" the stranger an-

swered from below the wharf.

Then he turned to John Deane. "Hustle into the dory. Take hold of the cleats on the side of the wharf. There! Sit down in the bow and I'll row."

In a twinkling almost, altogether too quickly to suit me, John climbed down into the dory and took a position facing me. We had not shaken hands or said anything about his going away, which was quite natural for boys of our age. However, when the dory pulled away from the wharf I said, "Good-by, John." "Good-by, Dave," he called back, and then the river mist began to gather him and the strange man and the dory into its folds. The oars thumped against the wooden tholepins. Nothing else came from out the darkness. John Deane had gone out of my life, entered into a life of mystery and toil and hardship that was now at its turning point. My boyhood friend disappeared forever in the river mist; when I again knew him he was on the highway to manhood.

The strokes of the oars became shorter and quicker as the dory approached the schooner, then came the rattle of the oars as they were shipped and fell upon the thwarts. There were indistinct sounds of voices, too, that came to me but not loud enough for me to understand what was being said. While I stood straining eyes and ears toward the phantom shape in the channel I thought I heard my own name called, "Dave! Dave!" I listened in vain for a further call, then doubted my own ears. Probably I was too eager to

hear something and my imagination had supplied the call in my mind. I did venture a reply, though, thinking it could do no harm. Imitating the example of the seaman I shouted into the darkness, "On board the schooner! All right, John?" No answer came to the call although I felt certain from the way I could hear voices that my shouting must have been heard aboard the schooner.

Presently there came the sound of oars and the outline of a dory appeared on the river from the direction of the schooner. The man at the oars skillfully turned the boat against the wharf, seized the cleat and climbed on the wharf with the boat's painter in his hand. He threw a couple of half-hitches with the rope about a piling before he turned up the wharf and hurried past me. I took a look at him, he peered down into my face as he passed. Captain Hinds and I were face to face!

"Oh, it's you, is it? What ye doin' here this time

of night?" he inquired sneeringly.

"I came down to catch some eels for breakfast," I retorted, surprised at my own readiness in replying. It puzzled me to know what Seth Hinds was doing aboard the *Nimbus*, for there was little love lost between him and Captain Ober since the latter had shipped John Deane in his crew.

"Eels?" he answered, puzzled at my strange reply.

"Yes, eels. Your wharf's a great place for slippery things," and I turned away and walked across to the other side of the wharf. What was he doing down here, too, at this time of night? That puzzled me.

He watched me closely for a while, then walked up the wharf. He was not fifty yards away before I rushed to the painter, threw it off the piling and climbed down into the dory. I did not know what I was going to do except that I wanted to learn more of the mysterious doings out in the channel before I returned home. I pushed the dory away from the wharf and seated myself at the oars. At this Captain Hinds, who had been watching my movements, rushed down to the end of the wharf and shouted angrily at me, "Bring that boat back. What are you doing anyway? I can have you arrested for taking my boat."

I kept on pulling at the oars, putting water between

us at every stroke.

"Bring that boat back, I say! This minute," he roared. But the dory sped on toward the schooner.

"On board the schooner! Hey! On board the schooner! Hello! Watch out for the dory. Keep

that fellow off! Don't let him get aboard!"

I was already half-way to the schooner. The crew were working at the windlass in getting the anchor off the bottom; there was a short chain out and the schooner would be adrift shortly. I pulled my best at the oars and before I was aware bumped bows on into the schooner's side. Over I went into the bottom of the boat. Before I could recover my feet one of the oars slipped out of the tholepin and fell into the water. It took me some time to recover the lost oar. When I got the dory back to the schooner's side again a gruff voice called from the rail, "What do you want? Keep off! We're getting under way and you are likely to get hurt."

"I want to speak to John Deane," I answered, hold-

ing the boat against the schooner.

"Who's he? No such person in the crew."

"Yes, there is; he just came aboard from the wharf, not ten minutes ago," I insisted, determined to find out what had become of my companion.

"I tell you they ain't," the other replied; "keep off,

or I'll throw a belaying-pin at you."

I was not so easily put off, so I set up a lusty shout, "John! John Deane!"

Then he let fly a missile which struck me on the left side and arm, causing me to gasp with pain for a moment. I picked the belaying-pin from the bottom of the boat where it had fallen and drove it back at the man who had thrown it at me. My shot took effect, striking my assailant in the lower part of his face.

"You throw another thing at me," I shouted in my rage, "and I'll come aboard your old boat and lick you so't you can't stand. I don't believe you are the *Nimbus*, anyway. I want to know what you have done

with John Deane."

I pulled the dory to the bow of the schooner close up against the chain which the crew were taking in. I looked in vain for the name Nimbus on the bow; instead I made out enough of the white letters to convince me that it was the schooner Harvest Home! John Deane was somewhere aboard Seth Hinds' schooner, kidnaped, perhaps bound and gagged, for no response came from my shouting.

Just as I made the discovery of the real name of the schooner the anchor-stock came out of the water directly under the dory. It tipped the boat over nearly to upsetting and I was thrown off my feet into the bottom of the boat. A puff of wind caught in the foresails, the schooner's bow turned off into the current and my chances either of punishing the man who threw the belaying-pin or of rescuing John Deane were lost forever.

I pulled back to the wharf quickly, intent only upon reaching my father and informing him of the strange state of affairs. In some fashion I fastened the boat's painter to the piling, then darted up the wharf at full speed thinking of no danger nor suspecting that a dark object was lying in wait for me. At the top of the bank I stopped a moment to look back upon the river. I could easily make out the schooner's white sails, for the

moon's rays were now reaching down into the flood. But the river was still misty; it seemed to me they were running a great risk to attempt to go out of the river

on such a night.

Suddenly from out the darkness a hand was clapped over my mouth and I was dragged backward to the ground. Not without a struggle. I managed to get one of the fingers of the hand into my mouth. I bit it viciously, ground it between my teeth until blows from the other hand of my assailant drove me into insensibility.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN A GRAND-BANKER RETURNS

THEN a grand-banker sets sail for a fourmonth voyage you may as well await her return with patience. That was a long summer to Comberton people. Everybody had an interest in the banking fleet. Some owned stock in the schooners; others had relatives among the crews; a few like myself had personal interest in an individual, although in the case of John Deane the interest in his fate was shared by all alike. Even Seth Hinds at times must have wondered how the lad was faring aboard his schooner. During the long months that Comberton awaited news from the Grand Bank his name was on every tongue. Nobody had heard a word of him, whether he was dead or alive, since the night the river mist had swallowed him from my sight. June gave way to the dog-days of July and still Comberton received no news from the fleet. August in turn held place on the calendar but it was not until the month was well into the twenties that word came from out the fogs of the Newfoundland banks.

In the meantime, I had recovered from the resentment and injuries that I had suffered the night I had visited the wharf to speed my friend on his way. Early the following morning my father had found me in a deep gully near the wharf, with my hands and feet firmly bound with cod-line and my mouth gagged by means of a piece of herring-stick. We had no doubt who my assailant was, for circumstantial evidence pointed

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straight toward Seth Hinds. It was noticed, too, that one finger of his left hand was bandaged for several days. The finger was injured, so he claimed, by getting it jammed in a door; yet I was as sure as a mortal could be that the hinges of that "door" were my own jaws. The captain disclaimed any knowledge of the whereabouts of John Deane and declared that he was not responsible for what Decatur Beers did once the captain of the *Harvest Home* was aboard the schooner which he commanded. So we had to wait for time to clear up the mystery of the boy's disappearance.

One evening in late August we were gathered about the steps of the store as was the custom among Comberton men and boys during the summer months. The men were discussing the probable arrival of the first schooner and we boys were eagerly drinking in every bit of wisdom and guesswork that fell from their lips; always the conversation led up to the case of John Deane, who was a life-sized hero to Comberton boys

that season.

It was a time when grand-bankers like to reach home, while the vegetables are still fresh in the garden and there are plenty of berries to be found in the back pasture lots. The fishermen know what is going on at home during the long months at sea, how the passing weeks mark the end of the planting, the time for the first new potatoes, the oncoming of the haying season and the harvesting of the grain crops. They long for fresh vegetables and meats, for a sight of Mt. Desert hills, and the joy of seeing their women and children about their home tables. These are the things that hold the grand-banker steady to his job while he toils amid the fogs of the Newfoundland banks.

Suddenly from the direction of the mouth of the river came the boom of a cannon. The spell was broken! The fleet was returning! A signal gun had

been fired to give warning of the good news. We listened for other shots to make sure our ears had not deceived us. Soon a second boom sounded through the stillness of the night. Some grand-banker was in the bay awaiting daylight and a favorable tide to reach the wharves of Comberton. Men sprang to their feet and shouted and waved their hats in the air. I ran home at full speed and burst in upon my mother with the welcome news that perhaps John Deane would be aboard the returning vessel.

That was a sleepless night for me. No Fourth-of-July ever found me astir earlier than did the following day. I made a mere pretense at eating breakfast, then started for the shore. People were there on the wharf ahead of me, anxious, wondering, speculating on what vessel it was and the news she would bring. Did they have news of John Deane? That was the one question that held interest for me. Possibly he was on this very schooner that was now entering the river. How I did

hope she was the Harvest Home.

The tide came in so slowly, the ship would never come. Even as we looked, however, the topmasts of the returning schooner appeared above the trees at the bend of the river. What schooner? Could any one make her out? Before her hull was visible the men on the wharf had made out what schooner it was. "It's the Harvest Home," declared one of the older fishermen. "Sure, it's the Harvest Home." These men know ships as a scientist knows his rocks and flowers. It ought to be the Harvest Home because Decatur Beers was her captain; few Comberton commanders year in and year out secured a fare of fish ahead of him.

The schooner rounded the point of land into full view. She was on the port tack, headed straight for the Comberton shore. The crew were there, we could see them eagerly waving their arms toward the happy

crowd on the wharf. Pretty well down by the scuppers the schooner was, too, a good sign of a successful season. Diagonally across the channel the Harvest Home charged bows on toward the rocks on the shore. at the right moment we heard the skipper's "Hard-alee!" ring out. The wheel spun around, the head-sails flapped loosely as the vessel's bow came into the wind. Slowly she came about on the starboard tack, then hesitated a moment before her sails filled and the schooner stood across the channel toward the opposite shore. She was a little nearer now and we could see the crew more plainly. Every eye was strained toward the schooner, toward the group of men on deck, when suddenly we saw something stir at the main-rigging, saw the breeze lift up and stretch across the whiteness of the mainsail the American flag at half-mast!

"My God, do you see that!" a man cried out near

me.

"Somebody's lost!" another whispered hoarsely.

Yes, and the flag thrown to the breeze to prepare the home folks against the shock. Who could it be? The schooner sailed farther and farther away. We could not distinguish any one of the crew. Women were weeping silently. Only whisperings and low moans could be heard on the wharf when the *Harvest Home* tacked about again and headed for the Comberton wharves.

"There's 'Cate Beers, anyway," said somebody. "See! standing by the house." Yes, and Lew Mills up forward, and Ranny McDonald—one by one the men on the wharf tallied off the returning crew, tallied them off and wrote their names on paper. Sixteen all told, none of the regular crew of the Harvest Home missing. Men looked at the names and passed the paper from hand to hand. Presently it was whispered through

the crowd, "John Deane! Sh-h! The Grahams are here on the wharf."

My heart was breaking. Not a word was spoken as the schooner drew near the wharf. Ropes were flung from the deck and secured to the pilings. Not a soul made an inquiry for John Deane. Was nobody interested? How I misunderstood the men. The crew were waiting for some one on the wharf to inquire, the home folks were expecting the crew to volunteer news of the boy's fate. I could stand it no longer. Pushing my way to the front of the wharf I called out, "Can any of you tell me about John Deane?"

A silence like that at a funeral fell upon the crew and shore people alike. Nobody spoke, the people waited breathless for answer. Then Lew Mills, the cook, stepped forward from his place near the forecastle and said with a voice that shook with emotion, "John Deane! Let nobody speak his name while we stand on this cursed slave-ship. When I am ashore I'll tell you more about John Deane than you want to

hear."

CHAPTER VIII

BREAKING A BOY

AD the cook of the Harvest Home struck me a blow in the face it could not have hurt more than his reply to my inquiry about John Deane's fate. For half an hour I stood watch over the companionway of the forecastle while the cook was below packing his sailor's bag preparatory to leaving the decks of the Harvest Home forever. Then I went with the crowd that followed him to the village store.

Lew Mills, the cook, rested his sailor's bag against the side of the building, pulled a few whiffs at his pipe, and told Comberton his story of John Deane. As he proceeded in his narrative the crowd pressed closer to the speaker but at no time did they interrupt him

throughout his talk.

"You want to know about John Deane? Well, you ought to know about Seth Hinds and 'Cate Beers, too: Beers and the man that owns him, Seth Hinds, are a precious pair of dogs if dogs ever get so low as those scoundrels. The night we sailed out of the river they pulled John Deane out of the dory onto the deck of the Harvest Home by tricking him. Kidnaped him! That's what it was. When the boy resisted and called out to somebody on the shore they knocked him senseless to the deck and dragged him to the forecastle for me to take care of. Did I? What man wouldn't? Not to help out their dirty work but for the boy's sake. God knows where John Deane is this minute."

The speaker paused a moment as if lost in the re-

flection of his thoughts, looking out over the heads of the listening crowd and pulling away at his pipe. After a while he resumed his narrative.

"They dragged him to the forecastle and dumped him down the gangway as if he was a bag of coal. Then that hellyun Hinds said to his sea-pirate, 'Break him, curse him! Break him so't he'll know his place when he sees land again!' That's what they've been doing to him while you folks have been wondering where the boy has been all summer. I found the boy lying in a heap at the foot of the steps and got him into my berth. I washed off the blood from his face and tied up a gash that had been cut when he struck against the forehatch after they knocked him down. By the time we had got out of the river into the bay the boy had come to and was telling me something about what had happened to him. Just about that time 'Cate Beers came down the companionway. When he saw the boy lying in the berth with a cloth about his head he was foaming mad.

"'Come out of there and get on deck to your watch!'

he bawled out.

"The boy tried to rise up but was so weak from his sickness and being knocked down that he fell back in the berth. Quick as a flash Beers leaped to the berth and yanked the boy out onto the floor. Then the brute kicked the fellow while he lay there too sick to get to his feet. Oh, he was breaking him all right, trust Decatur Beers for that.

"Some of the crew were in the forecastle. They are used to seeing able bodied seamen get a bruising but to see a sick boy being kicked while he was down went against their stomachs. They didn't stand for that, much as they feared 'Cate Beers. Right off three or four of them said they'd stand the boy's watch for him, seeing as the boy wasn't in any condition to go on deck.

Scissors to grind! Beers was madder than ever. He told the men to go to hell and ordered them on deck about their business. Then he grabbed the boy by the collar and yanked him to his feet.

"'Now get on deck lively and take that dish-rag off your head,' he said. He took hold of the bandage and began to rip it off the boy's head without any feeling

for the pain he was causing.

"My blood was fairly boiling now. I stepped up to Beers and said, 'Cap'n Beers, don't you lay hands on that boy again. You're boss on deck but, by mighty, so long's I'm cook on this craft I'm boss of the forecastle. You nor no other man don't lay a finger on him while he's down here until my case is settled first.' That settled matters for that night. Beers knows a

cook has rights in his own forecastle.

"But don't think he ever let up a minute on the boy after that night. No need to tell everything he done. The boy was put through the ropes day after day; every night, too, after we got on the banks the boy stood his own night watch and somebody else's. Nothing that he ever did was right, either. He had to shovel salt in the main-hold, help kench down the codfish, cut out cod's tongues and sounds and livers, bait trawls, fix gangings, dress fish, clean up the gurry-tubs and keep the schooner washed off what time the seas didn't do the job for him. He worked from daylight till dark. No, I'm wrong. He didn't work, he slaved under a cursing, heartless slave-driver who was trying to break him. When the day's work was done he had to sit humped up in the forecuddy baiting trawls till nine o'clock.

"Forty days he slaved like that! Enough to break any one's spirit and wear out a man's body. But Decatur Beers didn't so much as make a dent in either, except when he maltreated the boy's flesh. The boy is iron and steel. You can't break him and I guess the mill that Seth Hinds had been grinding him in helped the boy out when Beers got hold of him. At first we pitied him but when we saw his spirit and his power to work we just had to admire him. It was a battle between him and 'Cate Beers with all the advantage on the side of the cap'n; but it must have got on the nerves of Beers week after week to see that the only way he ever would break the boy would be to kill him.

"The boy didn't have half a show either, for he had come aboard the schooner without any clothing and outfit at all except what he wore on his back. Beers sent him into the forward berth, way up in the 'peak' where you roll and pitch worse than anywhere aboard the vessel. When he would turn in at night he'd crawl in there and roll from starboard to port on the boards all night, if a gale was on. The time came when he showed that he was a real man and we turned to and fitted up his berth with a strawbed and some quilts besides giving the boy some oilclothes. Grateful? The only time tears came into his eyes for the summer was the night he came in from his watch and found his berth fixed up fit for a human fisherman. Three weeks he'd been knocked down into the lee scuppers, kicked, cursed and abused. He took his medicine like an old salt though he didn't deserve any of it. When we watched him crawl away into the 'peak' that night and lie down and shake with sobbing because he was so grateful - well, we were paid a-plenty for what we had done."

While the cook was narrating John Deane's experiences at sea the people, while listening attentively and deeply interested in the account, were running ahead of the story in their minds and wondering what was the actual fate of the lad. As Lew Mills would stop from time to time the people would press closer to him; but

the moments were too precious for any to risk a question. The crowd awaited the outcome of the story as

if dumb with the solemnity of the occasion.

"The crew took to John Deane from the first," resumed Mills after a pause. "They didn't see much that took place board ship during the day for they were off in their dories tending trawls; but I did and the crew got enough second hand to sicken them of Decatur Beers. A few days after we got to the banks something happened that showed us what stuff was in John Deane. The men had come in from the trawls all petered out; you see they hadn't got broken in to their work yet and that day a heavy sea was running that made it hard to underrun the trawls. When the dories came along side the men pitched the fish aboard the schooner and began dressing down without saying much to any one; they just wanted to be let alone, that was all. John Deane was pitching codfish into a dressing keeler where Ranny McDonald was splitting. some way he knocked the keeler over and spilt the fish on the deck. He had things back in place in a minute or two; but Ranny is naturally snappish and on this day he was all out of sorts. Before he went to dressing fish again he took a ten-pound cod by the head and hit the boy ker-slap right across the face with the fish.

"It was a dirty trick to do. John Deane knew his rights as well as anybody aboard ship. It was one thing to put up with the skipper's abuse — it would be mutiny if he resisted — but quite a different matter when one of the crew began to abuse him. He let smash right off at Ranny's head with the fork handle. The

blow staggered the fellow for a moment.

"'Put up your fork, you Yankee pig-sticker, and

fight man fashion,' Ranny said.

"It didn't seem quite fair to the rest of us, Ranny picking the quarrel and being older and heavier than

the boy; but it's all in the life at sea. The two sparred for a minute before they clinched. Then in about two jiffs we got our eyes opened and Ranny got his closed. John Deane got hold of him and quick as lightning lifted him clean off the deck, right over his own head and threw him over the dressing keeler to the deck. Ranny struck awful hard and the blood spurted from his mouth when he fell. For the next two days the boy took his place in the dory. The crew never saw a thing done like that before nor since; after that they took good care not to let John Deane get his hooks on

them, boy though he was.

"Well, about a week afterwards, we were getting under way one day to change fishing berths. The wind was piping fresh and the old tub was bowling along at a good jog, as you know she can. All of a sudden a couple of dressing-keelers on top of some tubs went overboard. The man at the wheel put the wheel hard up and 'jibed over' instead of letting the schooner wear 'round. Bang came the mainboom across decks and hit Ranny in the side of the head hard enough to break it open if it hadn't been solid bone, besides knocking him overboard. There was a pretty mess - man knocked overboard senseless, with rubber boots and oilclothes on; it looked as if it was all up for Ranny. Some of the crew ran for a boat hook, others rushed to put a dory overboard but the one grand thing to see was John Deane jump across the deck; he stood for a moment on the taffrail and then took a header into the Atlantic ocean just as natural as if he was jumping off a piling into the Latona river. You see he didn't have rubber boots and oil clothes in those days, - shoes, shirt and pants, only, and that is what saved Ranny McDonald from going straight down into Davy Jones' locker on a through ticket. The boy overtook him at the first try and kept his head above water pretty much until we got the two of them into a dory. John

Deane was a man with us after that day.

"Ranny was laid up for another two days. When he got about deck again he was more of a man than he'd ever been before; being knocked senseless seemed to do him good. The first thing he did was to give John his hand.

"'Boy,' he said, 'there's more man in you at fifteen than there'll ever be in Ranny McDonald. Count me

on your side after this, if I'm worth counting.'

"Then he sat down on the brake and pulled off his rubber boots and gave them to the boy, probably the first pair he'd ever had on. For the rest of the summer Ranny wore his old leather cow-hides. That was the night we rigged up John's berth for him, the night, you remember, when the boy crawled under his quilts a-sobbing like a child at our kindness, though every man in the forecastle knew he was more of a man than any grown-up in the crew.

"Along the fore part of June the Nimbus hailed us and Captain Ober came aboard. He and Beers went into the cabin and had it out there. I guess the Old Man had the better of the argument for he showed that it would be piracy to come aboard another man's schooner and take off one of his crew. Any rate Captain Ober left without John Deane. But the two had a talk together up by the windlass; everybody had suspicions they were planning how John could desert the

Harvest Home on some dark night."

At this point the cook's pipe went out and he paused to thump it on the back of his thumb before refilling it. The crowd followed his every movement patiently. With the pipe going afresh the cook concluded his story.

"Come now to the last act. You'd have thought Captain Beers would have taken warning from some things he'd seen happen, but he didn't. He had been ordered to 'break' the boy and you know he's a man who obeys orders first and asks questions after. Things got to going worse after Captain Ober was aboard. The boy was watched pretty close and Beers always

had a man with him in his night watches.

"One afternoon when the boats were all out fishing and I was alone in the forecastle getting things ready for supper I heard John Deane call from the companionway. 'Cook, come up here,' he said. I went on deck and followed him to the main-hatchway, which was off. He pointed down into the hold where 'Cate Beers lay still and white as death. 'Looks as if he fell into

the hold,' the boy said, quietly.

"We had a hard time getting him on deck, he was heavy and clumsy to handle being so limpy. After we'd tied a rope about his waist we hitched on the topping-lift and hoisted him out of the hold like he was a barrel of bait. When we got him into his berth there was little life in him, I can tell you, and for the next three days a-running we scarcely knew whether he was in the land of the quick or dead. Nor cared much, either. How had it happened? Nobody knew and none of the crew inquired. John Deane kept his mouth shut. On the day of the accident I took a look about the hold where the boy had been working and where we found the captain lying. If you ask me, why I have suspicions that the old man abused the boy to the limit and John Deane probably turned and Ranny-McDonalded him. But, mind you, they are just suspicions. 'Cate Beers never mentioned the affair to anybody.

"When the captain showed signs of improving John said to me one afternoon, 'It's going to be an easy sea and thick-of-fog to-night, cook; my watch is be-

tween twelve and two.'

"I didn't need a lantern to see some things, so I said, 'I wish you'd see that the pail of water and bucket of grub under the companionway stairs gets overboard to-

night, John.'

"Come twelve o'clock and the watch called him. He put on his rubber boots and oils, then went on deck. I could hear him walking back and forth, back and forth, for a long time. Then I heard him working quietly near the dories. Just before his watch was up at two he came back into the forecastle and tiptoed over to my berth. Our hands met for a moment and he was gone. He went aft to the cabin where I heard him go below to call the watch. I was on the lookout in the companionway. He walked back to the mainrigging, stepped over the rail of the schooner — and that is the last any of us has seen of John Deane.

"When the crew got up next morning a dory was gone and the boy was missing. Nobody aboard ship knows until this day how he went or when he went or that I missed a pail of water and a bucket of grub from under the companionway stairs. Nobody knows where he is to-day. Comberton has raised some good men but

she never had but one John Deane."

Lew Mills concluded his narrative as abruptly as he had begun. At the end the people broke up into small groups talking over the success of the bank fleet for the summer and speculating among themselves what had become of John Deane after he disappeared from the deck of the *Harvest Home* into the fogs of the Grand Bank of Newfoundland. Nor did they cease from speculating until ten days later when the *Nimbus* returned from her maiden voyage with John Deane, rugged, brown and happy, standing alongside Captain Ober at his wheel.

CHAPTER IX

PLANNING LARGE

T was a new John Deane who stepped ashore from the schooner Nimbus when she returned to the wharves of Comberton from her first deep-sea voyage. Instead of the boy whom we remembered recovering from a long sickness we found as fine a specimen of sturdy adolescent as one could wish to see. He was my hero and how proud I was of him! He was taller and stronger than when he went away, well set up and erect, his hands and face brown as an Italian's, his blue eyes clear as stars in a winter night. One could see that he was crossing the threshold from indecisive youth to vigorous young manhood, already filled with an independence of spirit that was partly inherent and in part developed by his constant battle against unusual odds. His eyes were kindling with the vision of a great victory, the beginnings of which were even now coming to pass in his life.

During the days and months following his return, Comberton had no reason to be disappointed in the big things they were learning to expect from John Deane. The mystery of his escape from the fogs of Newfoundland banks after exposure in an open dory for three days and nights was partially cleared up by Captain Ober and his crew; it was little that even his most intimate friends could glean from the boy himself. Out of the fog and toil and hardships of the summer there came enough testimony for men to marvel that a youth of his age could endure all without flinch-

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response that he made whenever opportunity gave his merits, both physical and moral, a chance to display themselves. His ability to do hard work, his giant strength for one so young, his preponderance of animal vitality driven always to its full limit by a ruthless will — these were the fragments of testimony that Comberton gleaned from his shipmates in each schooner. More than that, they were personal impressions of the forces which had developed the latent possibilities of the lad so fast that, in a single summer, he had bridged the gap between awkward boyhood and early manhood.

Everybody expected that upon his arrival home John Deane would take action against Seth Hinds and Decatur Beers because of the ill treatment that he had suffered at their hands; yet nothing was done by the boy himself. It is so rare a gift to forget the hardships of the past and to use the hours of to-day against the hopes of to-morrow. The best manhood of to-mor-

row is founded on to-days, not on yesterdays.

However, my father was not willing that justice in his own town should go by default through inaction. He laid the whole affair, if so public a matter needed restatement, before the county attorney, who brought charges against both men. The upshot of the trial was that Hinds was acquitted of the charge of kidnaping, since John refused to appear against his uncle and there were no other witnesses to the fact. But Beers was found guilty of cruel and abusive treatment of the boy and was fined one thousand dollars by the court. Since Hinds was John Deane's guardian the money was paid to him in trust for the boy, and everybody knew well that Captain Beers borrowed the thousand dollars from Hinds before paying it to the county clerk, who in turn delivered it to the custody of guardian Hinds. So it appeared to Comberton folks that Beers paid no penalty for maltreating John Deane half a summer on the banks and that Seth Hinds gave me a sound threshing, bound me hand and foot, and gagged me with a herring-stick only to escape scotfree. But it is a gift of youth to have long memories as well as long visions. Mackerel that are hatched in

June do not reach maturity by October.

Months roll into years too swiftly with men who press this daily work with eagerness. In the case of John Deane the years that followed his first deep-sea venture were filled with a variety of experiences. Immediately following his summer on the banks he shipped with Captain Ober in the Nimbus for a voyage to the West Indies with a cargo of cured codfish in the vessel's hold. Another summer he was on the fishing banks with his captain, learning all the time about the mysteries of the ocean below and the wiles and hardships of the ocean above, and the business of being a deep-sea fisherman. He took trips to the Magdalene Islands in the spring of the year when Comberton schooners would return from the Gulf of St. Lawrence loaded to the gunwales with cargoes of bloater herring that were to be cured in the tall smoke-houses on the wharves of the Latona river. He did not miss the biting cold and exposure that attends the Newfoundland trip in winter for frozen herring.

Two summers at the banks were followed by a wider range of experiences in the mackerel fisheries of Gloucester. John Deane shipped aboard a mackerel schooner in March and followed the intricacies of the business from the first rough, cold weeks off Hatteras through the "Cape Shore" trip along the coasts of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton island, back to the New England waters and Fundy during the warmer months, finally winding up the fishing season with the fleet that sailed into the North Bay and trailed the furtive mackerel

until they disappeared in late October for their mysteri-

ous winter dwelling places in southern waters.

He loved the sea, loved the thrill of oncoming storms, the strife against the strength of wind and wave, the rage of winter and the charm of summer, the disappointments, the victories, the storm and stress that come to those who follow the sea for a living. Loving the sea as he did and eager to perfect himself as a capable seaman his advancement was rapid. Deep-sea fishermen learn mostly in the school of experience on the boundless stretches of the ocean; to the lore of the sea not a few of them add a knowledge gained from study. This was true of John Deane. In addition to the fund of information that he picked up from a wide range of reading he spent two winters at the academy where I was preparing for college. Of course we were roommates. While I was attempting blind Homer and versatile Cicero my friend was busied with studies that appealed to him as more practical, especially history and the sciences, in which he made rapid progress.

Except for the winter schooling together we two saw little of each other, since John Deane was upon the seas most of the time while I was attending my school duties. Occasionally he would be at home for a brief period between trips or at the close of the fishing season; but however little I was able to see him it was always next to my heart to keep alive to his whereabouts and his

development as a fisherman.

One spring half a dozen years after his first trip to the banks we were at home and together attended the town meeting. That was a rare occasion in Comberton as in other New England towns. This particular meeting was a red letter day in Comberton history from the fact that after all business for the day had been transacted and everybody was awaiting a motion for the meeting to adjourn Captain Seth Hinds took the floor and, greatly to the surprise of his audience, proclaimed his intention to offer a reward of a thousand dollars to the commander of a Comberton schooner who should "gather the most valuable harvest from the seas" during the season.

"I'm giving the reward," the captain explained, "to stimulate our fisheries. The skipper'll have to be a Comberton captain sailing a Comberton schooner with half of his crew from the town. I'm goin' to put a note for a thousand dollars in the hands of the selectmen to-day and they'll be judges as to who wins the prize next fall."

The unexpected generosity of the captain's was the talk of the town for days. When the people had time to reflect upon the offer most of them conceded that possibly there were whole-hearted motives on the donor's part in offering so big a reward. A thousand dollars! That was an event in Comberton. Unfortunately for the captain's reputation, however, there were not a few of the loudest talkers who still persisted in attributing mercenary motives to Seth Hinds; it was unthinkable to them that he should make such an offer with no strings attached. What was his motive? That question could not be answered satisfactorily by his fellow townsmen.

"He's got some ax to grind," commented Bill Spurling in the store one evening. "What he wants is to get next to Comberton voters so they'll send him up to Augusty to the legislature next winter."

"You're wrong, there, as usual, Bill," answered Eben Springer, loyal to his employer. "The cap'n knows well enough they ain't any other skippers but his own can take the prize anyhow. They've been high line of the fleet goin' on half a dozen years. He wants to stimulate them."

"Stimulate dogfish!" Bill exclaimed. "It's an easy

bet that if Seth Hinds gives a thousand dollars to one of his skippers he'll rob his crews of eleven hundred to

pay the bill with interest."

"That's all right to talk such nonsense but it don't get nowhere. Who's a better fisherman in Comberton to-day than 'Cate Beers? Hey? He's a thousand or two ahead of every other schooner any year. Now ain't that so?"

"'Cate Beers!" Bill retorted again. "You make me tired, Eb. I've sailed with 'Cate Beers and know he's no better than lots of other folks and a durned sight worse in some ways. It's only because he's been given a chance. Seth Hinds'll give any skipper a chance who will drive his men like they were nigger slaves. Man for man, 'Cate Beers is in the same class with half a dozen men right here in Comberton that I could name. I'll bet you one sweet cooky he gets the pants trimmed off him this year," Bill concluded as he left the store.

Bill was more of a prophet than he dreamed he would be and, as events showed, he took no small part in the

season's trimming.

A thousand dollars reward! Comberton had never known the like of that before. How the reward loomed large in the minds of the fishermen! A thousand dollars was not to be lightly disregarded by any fisherman, especially when the earning of it would mean that the man was the biggest personage connected with the Comberton fleet. Men grown gray in the swirl of salt spray mused over a success that would have been theirs had such an opportunity been given them in their prime. Youths of the fleet who were even now proving their mettle and showing how they were chips of the old block dreamed impossible dreams of sudden, overwhelming success that would win the coveted prize for them. The sober, calculating senators of the sea, middle-aged

and veterans of their calling, girded up their long yellow oil jackets and, unconscious of any new dignity that they had assumed, strutted about the wharves in quiet confidence, each one assuring his own little circle of admirers that he would "give the winner a run for

his money."

Yet in all the crowd of possible and would-be competitors for Seth Hinds' treasure none felt a thrill at the announcement of the reward so keenly as John Deane. It seemed to him that the dawn of a greater day was at hand, that his old enemy had placed before the world the very weapon which would be used by the younger man for his well making. To win the reward would be a great event not so much for its intrinsic value as for the satisfaction he would have in winning it from Seth Hinds, especially since it was generally agreed that Hinds expected his own skipper, Captain Decatur Beers, to walk off with the honors easily. It was a challenge John Deane could not resist, a challenge of two strong, unscrupulous men, a challenge of an untried youth against veteran seamen, of a single individual against the owner of a fleet of ships. It was the kind of a challenge that the soul of John Deane had been instinctively yearning for since his first summer at sea. To win would require financial backing, a valiant crew, eternal, unyielding vigilance at sea, a continuous fight against the devices of scheming men and angry seas. Such a challenge stirs the blood of men of the Viking kind.

The days that followed the historic town meeting were filled to the brim for John Deane. By day he was at the wharves talking and consulting with captains and fishermen, in the evening he was at our sitting-room table figuring the evening through on brown paper. In all his talk and figuring he kept his business to himself; at least he announced his plans only to those whom

he could trust. One evening when we were all gathered about the table and he had been figuring for an hour or more he pushed his papers from him and looking up from his work told us of his plans for the future.

"I've hired the Nimbus for the summer," he began, addressing my father. All of us stopped in our occupations, looking toward him in astonishment while we

waited for him to explain.

"Hired the Nimbus!" father exclaimed, incredulous that even so high spirited a fellow as John Deane should undertake such a project at his age. "What under the

sun are you going to do with the Nimbus?"

"Going mackerel seining in her," John answered briefly; then at father's request for information as to how he would equip and man a schooner, or could get credit to finance the endeavor for a whole season John laid bare the result of his planning and work. He had saved up a thousand dollars in his fishing experiences the past five years, which would form the nest egg of his endeavors.

"Yes," father interrupted rather uncordially, "that would just about take you and your schooner out of the Latona river."

John came back with a laugh and with an earnestness in his words that carried conviction to his listeners that he had planned carefully before undertaking his

project.

"I have the thousand that I have saved in the last half dozen years," he went on. "Then Captain Ober has given me good terms in paying for the schooner's rental, in June, September and the last of the season. I expect to make the ship pay for her own rent this summer as we go along."

"Suppose you don't have any luck," father interrupted again. "There's many a good man who fails at sea because luck is against him. It's a big gamble

in the fishing business."

"So it is," retorted John, "and the fellow who is alive is the winner. Mackerel seining requires a pair of good eyes first of all. I've got as good as any of them. It means a knowledge of how mackerel maneuver, where they stay, and a thousand and one tricks of the trade; even then the best seiner makes a mistake and wrong guess where they are or what they will do next. Finally, you have got to be working day and night, week in and week out, to win against the mackerel. That's what I can do with any one in the whole Gloucester fleet. I can work as hard and as long as the best of them and I'll risk the luck and other part of the business. I've been with two of the best seiners of New England, which gives me a good start in knowing something about the business."

"Well, that sounds good," said father again. "But come back to Comberton. You've got to fit the Nimbus for the seining business. That will take money,

more than your bank account."

"Yes, I'll need to buy seine and seine-boat, make some minor alterations in the Nimbus, such as a seine-roller, boat-boom and dipnets. That's the principal charge on that count. Two weeks ago, you may remember, I became of age. You may have forgotten that judgment was rendered in my favor six years ago to the extent of a thousand dollars. You Comberton folks thought Seth Hinds was going to keep hold of that money all his life but he isn't. The court ordered 'Cate Beers to pay to Seth Hinds, my guardian, the sum of a thousand dollars. My attorney tells me that in addition Hinds owes me interest on that amount for six years, making a total of thirteen hundred dollars, which makes a handy birthday present for me. Be-

sides, I expect another thousand before the season is over. I'm going into the seining fishery because I believe that I can make a bigger stock than any other Comberton man can make in the grand-bank fishery for cod. In an average season a mackerel seiner will stock more than a grand-banker. Captain Hinds did not limit his reward to the bank fishermen. He will squirm some when he learns that I have entered the race for his prize. That's why I have hired the Nimbus for the season."

"And you will be the captain?" I inquired, inter-

rupting for the first time.

John nodded in assent. Then he resumed speaking to tell us that he had already secured several of his crew, Bill Spurling and George Keene, old mackerel seiners, Ranny McDonald and Lew Mills, who had been sailing from Comberton for the last three years. The others of his crew he would get from grand-bank crews, with one or two promising greenhorns to make up the necessary crew from the home port.

"Have you any idea what green hands you will take

along?" father inquired.

"No, sir. But I'll pick two or three fellows with plenty of life in them. Young fellows, strong and quick to pull at the oar or on the purse-line, make

good mackerelmen," he answered.

"David," said my father, suddenly turning to me, "why don't you ship with Captain Deane for the summer? You are not much use in the hayfield and here's a chance for you to earn a little money for your college bills."

Before I could reply my mother interposed. "Why, Hiram Graham, David's only a boy. Besides —"

She hesitated to go on.

"Besides what? As I remember, John wasn't much more than a boy when he first went to sea. David is nineteen now, where John was fifteen then," father replied in a manner to show how easily he could settle a question.

"I was going to say that we have planned for David to have a college education and not become a fisherman," my mother answered reluctantly, fearing that

her answer might offend John.

"I would not have to stay at sea all my life, mother," I interrupted, all eager on the moment to embark in the undertaking that father had suggested. "I don't know how I can earn money unless I go to sea or do something like that."

"Then you are willing to ship as one of my crew?"

John inquired.

"If my folks are willing, and I guess they are," was

my reply.

So it was settled as quickly and unexpectedly as that. I was to become a mackerel fisherman until the opening of the college in the fall. That night I slept with the captain of the *Nimbus* and we talked about my equipment and his former lack of equipment and laid great plans for the summer, far into the night.

CHAPTER X

AN ASH BREEZE

A T high noon on Friday, in mid-April, moorings were cast off, the sails shaken out of stays and under the guidance of a diminutive tugboat the schooner Nimbus swung out into Gloucester harbor amid the cheers and good wishes of the crowd on the wharf. Captain John Deane, the pride of every man of his crew and the envy of many a man on the wharf old enough to be his father, was at the wheel. At his command to set the mainsail the crew manned the ropes, one crowd at the throat halvards, another at the peak, and swayed to and fro as their hands and arms went up and down at every pull. When the maingaff swung free from its place on the boom a puff of wind caught the sail, bellying out great folds to its accustomed smoothness. As the maingaff neared the masthead the laboring crew found difficulty in sending it upward.

"Hold on your throat, you're choking the peak," called one of the older men. The puffing crowd at the port passed the halyard under a chock to hold the sail steady while their comrades hoisted the peak above the

ambitious throat.

"Now, sway her up, all together!"

At the last stage of hoisting the huge sail the halyard was passed under a chock, some of the crew strung along the deck pulling away at the free end of it, while others, after placing their feet against the foot of the mainmast, seized the standing part of the rope high up

and swayed outward until their bodies touched the deck. The process was repeated until the sail was chock-a-block, the leech was drawn tight as a violin cord and the peak of the sail stood out at a sharp angle in the air.

After the mainsail had been set the "jumbo" or forestay-sail, foresail and mainjib followed in quick succession. The tug cut loose from the schooner before all the lower sails were set. A fresh northwest breeze, favorable to our course, carried the schooner forward at a good clip. The topsails and light jibs were set when the harbor entrance was passed. Under full spread of sails the *Nimbus* bowled along out into the open sea. Gradually the volume of ocean increased, the land astern receded, and shortly the fishing port which we would not see again for weeks disappeared from view below the northern horizon. My experiences as a deep-sea fisherman had begun.

The past four weeks had been very busy ones for John Deane. In one particular he acted wisely; whenever he found one of his crew whom he could trust he would commission him with full power to go ahead. this way he was enabled to fit out the Nimbus in the last three weeks of the month. He had an interview with Lew Mills which resulted in Mills accepting the position of cook and undertaking the task of finding a few mackerelmen at North Haven. He sent Bill Spurling to Gloucester to pick out the other men, the best he could find, and make a start at equipping the Nimbus for the southern spring mackerel fishery. He himself attended to the Nimbus at Comberton, had her hull scraped anew and painted, put aboard a store of food supplies that could be purchased as cheaply there as in Gloucester, overhauled the sails and rigging and got together a crew of eight Comberton fishermen including himself. Amid the multiple details of his work he had

braic formulas.

also the pleasure of receiving from his attorneys a check for thirteen hundred dollars, with a statement that Captain Hinds settled the account under protest only. When all was in readiness the *Nimbus* with its young captain and attending crew of five, sailed away from the wharves of Comberton upon the most eventful voyage ever a Comberton schooner experienced. We picked up Lew Mills and four other men at North Haven. When we reached Gloucester Bill Spurling was awaiting us with three other men. We lacked one man to make a crew of sixteen and him we found before the *Nimbus* set sail for the fishing grounds.

Everything was new and strange to me. To be sure, I had some knowledge of vessels, their rigging and equipment. Yet it was a harbor knowledge, wholly theoretical and never put to practice. We were scarcely outside East Point when Skipper John, that being the title I had decided to use when speaking of John Deane, called for the watch at the wheel. My berth was in the cabin, the first one aft the captain's quarters; so it was my first trick at the wheel. The course given me by the skipper was southeast. "Southeast," I answered in taking the wheel, as if I had always handled spokes of wheels instead of alge-

It was a kind act of George Keene to come to my aid during my trick at the wheel. The wind was well astern. One might think that the matter of steering would be very simple, since we had only to keep the schooner before the wind to run on our course. When we got away from land several miles and the waves rolled higher and higher from astern I found that the wheel needed constant watching to keep the schooner to her course. As the *Nimbus* mounted the crest of a wave she would veer a little to port; on descending to the trough she plunged even farther off her true course

to the starboard. The big mainsail was well out over the port rail. The wind would strike into the sail in varying puffs and cause it to yaw back and forth, which increased the unsteadiness of the schooner.

George Keene took position opposite me at the wheel-box. He explained how to put the wheel down when the vessel veered to port in mounting the wave and as she raced down into the trough to check the starboard sheer by turning the wheel a few spokes in the opposite direction. The theory of steering with the wind astern became very clear to me at once; but actually it took weeks of practice before I could handle the *Nimbus* tolerably well without being conscious of my act. The experienced mariner holds the vessel to her course by plying the wheel a couple of spokes only and does it all unmindful of his act.

During the afternoon we crossed Middlebank, reaching Cape Cod before dark. Late in the evening Nauset Light gleamed dimly on the starboard quarter, which was the last indication of land for the day.

During the night the breeze freshened. High seas were running on Saturday morning. All that day we ran out of sight of land in taking a wide course to the southeastward to pass the South Shoals. Sunday morning our course was changed to the westward and the schooner rolled along in the trough of the seas, for a wind still blew hard. Block Island was passed before noon. Later in the afternoon we were off Montauk Point, Long Island, which appeared very unattractive through the rain and driving spray, especially as I was sick as I had never dreamed it was possible for mortal to be sick and survive.

Two days from port and we had been through some seas! All my life I had heard tell of running with "scuppers under," the "lee rail awash," and all that; now we were having experiences. Others of the crew

were not disturbed by the rough seas, so I tried to restrain myself. But those first experiences were thrilling ones! The schooner rocked and rolled all day Sunday in the trough of the waves. At times her bows went under and the blue water would come pouring in sheets over the cat-heads to rush down to the brake before it found its way back to its proper element over the rail or through the scuppers. The Nimbus would shake her head and throw off the masses of water as if she was playing with a toy, then plunge forward down into the deep trough like a racing steed.

On his maiden voyage as commander, John Deane showed a disregard for wind and wave that shortly made his name famous among the fishing fleet. His maxim was to lose as little time as possible in port and on the passage to and from the fishing grounds. He had sailed in the crew of the Nimbus two years, long enough to discover that she was no light breeze sailer; but when it came to rough weather, with the schooner well ballasted astern, there was none in the fleet that

could compare with her.

When the course of the schooner was turned southward at Montauk Point we got a little taste of what to expect from our skipper. The weather became more boisterous and the seas rougher. Skipper John kept the log-line at the rail all the time to keep track of our speed and the distance we were getting south. Most of the daytime of Monday we raced through the rough seas at a ten-knot clip, up wave and down trough, with seas breaking over the schooner much of the time. On Tuesday morning, then, we were not surprised to find ourselves in the vicinity of the spring fishing grounds for mackerel. What was of more importance was a subsidence of both wind and seas shortly after we reached the proper latitude where we could expect to find traces of schooling mackerel.

Instead of fair skies and smooth seas and an abundance of schooling mackerel, as we had hoped, we were doomed to disappointment. The seas subsided only to rise again. Schools of mackerel and flocks of sea-geese disappeared from the region where they had been reported in abundance. With the dawn of another day a gray streak of clouds smutted the low horizon, another night found our schooner tossing about on troubled waters. A "dry northeaster" struck us full and fair, although not without adequate preparation. Our seine and seine-boat were stowed snugly on deck in anticipation of rough weather, the upper sails were furled, the decks cleared for action. Others of the seining fleet in the vicinity ran to the shelter of the Delaware capes, only the Nimbus remaining outside to contest the rage of the winds.

Other days came, filled for a time with hope of a chance to catch mackerel; but always we were doomed to disappointment. Even when a day or two of fair weather settled upon the seas the mackerel came to the surface in scattered schools, always too wary and wild to be taken by the great seines. Storm after storm followed in regular succession, scattering the mackerel, driving the fleet to the friendly shelter of nearby ports and deferring the day when any of the schooners should be fortunate to make a catch of fish.

One day, on the ninth of May, the seas again spread out in smooth waters, little flocks of sea-geese — tell-tale spirits of the haunts of schooling mackerel — appeared mysteriously from out the skies, the mackerel fleet gathered from widely scattered regions and scoured the seas in search of the elusive prey. Out of the north came another schooner to join those that had been buffeted by a fortnight's gale. It was Bill Spurling who announced from the foremast crosstrees the name of the on-coming vessel.

"The schooner Harvest Home, of Comberton, heaves in sight on the horizon," he shouted down to the won-

dering crew on the deck of the Nimbus.

If any had doubts about Bill's information they were dispelled a couple of hours later when the Harvest Home joined the fleet. She was fitted out for seining and, when we passed close by her, we saw for ourselves that none other than Decatur Beers was in command. Not only in command, but luck was with the veteran of the Grand Banks. His schooner had not been with the fleet two hours before they had taken aboard a school of mackerel big enough to cause the lucky skipper to head about at once for market.

The mackerel appeared in scattered schools all about us just as the *Harvest Home* joined the fleet. Her arrival could not have been more opportune; it was almost uncanny how success attended the schooner from the first.

Not to the Harvest Home alone did good luck come. Others of the fleet secured small catches during the day. I was on the crosstrees with Skipper John shortly after the arrival of the schooner which, we all felt sure, was destined to be our rival and enemy. We were scouring the seas intently for a school of fish. On the port side I discovered something black on the water's surface which I thought might be a school of mackerel.

"What is that down there?" Skipper John took a glance at the spot, then shouted to the men below,

"Draw up the boat."

"You'd better go down," he said to me, but before I was half way down the rigging he had called out again, "Get into the boat!"

I was flopping my clumsy rubber boots in and out of the ratlines as fast as I could when a streak of something shot down past me to deck. It was the skipper descending on the standing rigging. I grabbed a rope and swung onto deck just as the seine-boat came alongside. There was no time for oil clothes. The crew were rushing from the cabin and forecastle with their oil clothes in hand. We tumbled into the boat without ceremony, half of us without oil clothes. In another moment we were pulling away toward the school of mackerel.

As we came alongside the school Bill Spurling, glancing at the black spot, exclaimed, "It's a cart-wheeler, boys. See them go around! We've got to catch them anyway."

And catch them we did, the biggest catch for the entire fleet in a month. The crew of the Harvest Home had hardly got the last mackerel of their catch aboard the schooner before they hoisted topsails and light jibs and headed the schooner toward New York. We lost no time in getting into the race although neither skipper gave up further attempts to catch mackerel. We were out in the boat several times and made two fruitless sets of the seine; but always the general trend of our schooner was northward. By three in the afternoon both schooners gave up all attempts at fishing. We were in a more favorable position than the other, since we were two miles farther north and a half mile nearer the wind. All our sails were set; yet with this spread of canvas the Nimbus, which was making four knots an hour only in the light wind, was being distanced half a knot or more every hour by the other schooner. We watched the Harvest Home narrowly and were reluctant to admit that she was surely gaining on the Nimbus. By six o'clock the two schooners were even in the race. When darkness settled upon the quiet waters the Nimbus was two miles astern its rival, although half a mile to windward.

"Give us a twelve-knot breeze," said George Keene, and we will trim old Beers to market. This light

stuff is just what the *Harvest Home* wants and the *Nimbus* doesn't. They'll reach to market half a day ahead of us, get a top price for their mackerel and we'll have to take what we can."

"Yes, but we'll get to market, and that's more than many a poor fellow has done this spring," retorted Lee Parish.

When darkness had set in and, as everybody supposed, the schooner made ready for the night, we were called from below by the watch telling us that the skipper wished to see all men on deck. Lew Mills, the cook, was the last to appear. We gathered about the

skipper as he stood on the brake.

"Men," he said quietly after Mills appeared, "we have got a good fare of fish aboard, a lucky streak for us. We want to get the fish to market as soon as possible. It looks as if Beers would be half a day ahead of us at the rate we are going. I want you to take hold to-night and put the Nimbus in the lead. If we can be in the lead off Sandy Hook the race is ours. We must not let the Harvest Home crew know what we are up to. We will tow the Nimbus to-night, turn and turn about. One crew will row until ten, then another take their places in the seine-boat until midnight. Then there will be another shift all around before daylight, when it will be time to quit towing the schooner. There's fifteen of us to do the rowing, not counting the cook; he's got enough to do without getting into the boat. I'll take my turn with the rest of you; we will have a shift of eight men in the boat the first two hours and seven men at the next shift. We can steal a couple of miles every hour on the Harvest Home and they won't be the wiser until daybreak, when we ought to be in the lead several miles."

The cook interrupted the skipper at this point. "You can count me in on this deal, skipper. I'm

neither sugar nor salt, and I guess I can do my share of rowing for one night, say from now till ten and from twelve to two when it will be time for me to get up anyway."

"Good for you, steward," shouted the men, in good humor at the prospects of getting in the lead over their

rival.

"In the morning," concluded the skipper, "we will not be worn out much, resting and sleeping half of the time, and I'll miss my guess if we don't beat the Harvest Home to market."

I was in the first shift of men to go into the seineboat. We rigged up a long painter and at a distance of a couple of hundred feet ahead of the schooner we pulled away steadily until the watch at the wheel of the Nimbus called us aboard. During the two hours in the boat we had rowed into the wind a little off the regular course to make sure of getting past the rival schooner without being discovered. The skipper also warned us against unnecessary noise in talking and at the oars for fear of alarming the watch on the Harvest Home. When the boat went out a second time Skipper John took his place at the oars and rowed with his crew until midnight.

I pulled off my boots and coat before hauling the quilts over me; then I was lost to the world until some-

body shook my shoulder at midnight.

"Come on, boy, time to get the sleepy-dogs out of

your eyes."

In the two hours from midnight until two o'clock the wind remained light, scarcely a breeze stirring on deck although there was a little movement in the topsails. None of us had seen the Harvest Home since nine in the evening. We could only conjecture how much we were outdistancing her. At two in the morning I returned to my berth with a feeling of having done a day's work since the time I turned out twenty-

two hours previously.

Morning dawned without a breeze. The schooner lurched and reeled along sometimes without headway, the sails flapping and the booms swaying back and forth across the deck. We were making some headway, however, and better still our rival was a half dozen miles astern of the Nimbus at five in the morning. It took the crew of the Harvest Home some time to conclude that the Nimbus, instead of being below the horizon astern of them, was really in the lead of their schooner by a good margin. When it did dawn upon them that Skipper John had stolen a march on them during the night they lost no time in manning their seine-boat and beginning the long, hard stern chase to bring their schooner up with the Nimbus.

By eight o'clock they had made substantial head-way, there being only a mile's distance between the two schooners. We began to calculate how long it would take for them to be in the lead of us. As they advanced we became restless. Some of the crew wondered why our skipper did not order us into the seine-boat and retain lead over the *Harvest Home*. Finally, Lew Mills suggested to the skipper that the crew were

awaiting orders to man the boat.

"So they like the ash breeze, do they?" responded Skipper John. "I thought probably they got enough

of that last night."

"We did for the night but we don't like to see those other fellows go right by us in broad daylight and hand out the tail-end of a tow-rope to us as they go past," Mills answered.

"How's the dinner getting along, cook?" the skipper

asked.

"Oh, I'm not neglecting the dinner. That will be served on time; only I am interested in getting to mar-

ket before the others do. It's too bad to be up all night and then lose the race in broad daylight," the cook replied.

"You are right, cook. We won't lose the race either. I want every man to have his dinner by nine

o'clock."

The cook disappeared in the forecastle. Ten minutes later he sounded the dinner call for the first gang. Twenty minutes later he had removed the plates of the first gang and we of the second gang were grinding away on our food. It was a few minutes before nine when we came up from the forecastle. The Harvest Home was three hundred feet astern of us, her crew pulling earnestly on the oars to get ahead of the Nimbus. Skipper John watched the laboring crew for a few minutes with apparent indifference; then he turned to Lew Mills and gave him instructions about handling the Nimbus. It was not until the other schooner was abreast ours that we got an inkling of Skipper John's plan. Leaving four men in the schooner with Mills he had the rest of us man the seine-boat; then we pulled away from the schooner's side this time without towing the Nimbus. Sandy Hook was about five miles away and we could expect to be picked up by a tow-boat at any time.

Skipper John's strategy had placed his schooner in the lead of his rival's by several miles. Then while his own crew were resting and getting their dinner the crew of the *Harvest Home* were towing their schooner to overtake ours, doing the hardest kind of work for four hours while we were resting. Now it would be an even race for a tow-boat, Skipper John with a fresh crew, the other schooner with a crew already weary

with rowing and unrefreshed by dinner.

Away we pulled from the Nimbus with full, strong strokes. In a minute more Beers, who was watching

us narrowly, realized Skipper John's tactics. He had been taken by surprise by his young opponent and fairly outwitted during the night. He did not hesitate a moment when he saw our boat was free of the schooner. Dropping his steering oar he stepped to the towing line and cast it off. His boat, too, was free for the race. Away they went — no Comberton schooner ever had better crews than Beers carried — bending to their oars as if they never knew what fatigue was. It was a grand spurt. Under the spur of their skipper they struggled to take the lead from the boat of the Nimbus.

Gradually their boat forged ahead of ours. We bent to our work eagerly and tried to cover the gap between the boats. It was a race of giants of the sea, a race that meant bread and butter for the winner as well as prestige among the seining fleet. In five minutes more we were again abreast the boat of the Harvest Home. They were pulling hard and straining every muscle to keep in the lead. We could not see for ourselves, for every man was giving his undivided attention to his long oar. But our skipper was sizing up the situation for us.

"Save yourselves, men. Keep steady. We've got them beat in twenty minutes more. They are tuck-

ered out to begin with while you are fresh."

He spoke in low tones. We made no further effort to regain the lead. Skipper John was content for the present to keep abreast the other boat. Twenty minutes passed. We were now sure that the skipper was right. We shot occasional glances at the other men. Some of them still had on their oil clothes, for they had not had time to remove extra clothes. In spite of the perspiration that streamed from their faces they stuck to their oars as if chained in place like rowers in ancient galleys. Half an hour now since the

race was on. Our boat was in the lead by its length. Quarter of an hour more and the gap had increased to fifty yards. We were rowing strong, yet felt we had good reserve strength left when the crisis should come. The skipper spoke to us occasionally to keep our minds off the work and to steady the stroke.

Suddenly we saw John Deane straighten up and look forward intently. Then he pulled off his hat and shouted to us the call we had long been hoping to hear.

"Go ahead on your oars, boys. Go ahead! Pull for all there is in you. A tug-boat in sight and we

must get her first."

We were equal to the call for the final spurt. John Deane had played us well, kept us fresh in the morning hours, given us a dinner to work on, conserved our strength as we rowed against our opponents and had made no appeal to us until the last moment. Our boat shot through the water. Back and forth swung our backs, always keeping pace with Lew Parish. Never a skip nor a mis-stroke that morning. We never had been tired in the world. No crew of hardy Vikings ever bent to their oars with keener relish than did we young subjects of our captain who was king in our eyes that day. Muscles might be fatigued, but the excitement of the moment and the spur of our leader's voice drove fatigue from our limbs. Oh, it was grand to dip the long oar into the water and come back against the ash with back and arms and legs. Good old ash breeze, how many victories have been recorded in your name!

The crew of the Harvest Home were not to be outdone by a set of youngsters. No, that would not sound well down home. They would have to explain how it had happened. What a come-back for tired men! Beers pleaded with them, urged them forward, waved his hat and gesticulated with his arms. The Harvest Home

just could not be beaten! It was not her custom. The tired, hungry men responded like heroes to their leader's entreaties. Their oars bent to the snapping point. Their strong backs rounded over and straightened to the pull in unison. What power was in their strokes! Their boat leaped through the water and the gap between the boats lessened.

When John Deane looked back and saw that the other boat was gaining he called out, "Was last night's work all for nothing? What do you say, Lee Parish? Drive her harder!"

No man of the fleet could row with Lee Parish. He was a man of iron muscles, that had been hardened through years of service at sea and tempered in the halibut fishery of Iceland. It was grand to see his response and to watch how the men behind him on the thwarts, taking his stroke for a pace, fairly lifted themselves off their seats as they pulled at their oars. We were getting near the tugboat, which was coming on at full speed. This much we could tell from Skipper John's motions.

"We're right here, men. One minute more. Don't mind me when the tug comes. Keep rowing right past

the tug."

The end came suddenly. Skipper John stood at the steering oar watching to board the tug with no waste of time that would allow the other boat to come up.

"Trail the starboard oars!" he yelled. We had scant time to drop our oars under the side of the boat when the tug-boat shot past. With a twist of the oar Skipper John threw the stern of the boat in toward the tug then, before we were aware what was happening, he made a flying leap through the air and fell in a heap over the rail of the tug-boat. He scrambled to his feet and rushed to the wheel-house just as the tug-boat shot up to the other seine-boat.

"Fifty dollars to tow me to market!" John Deane shouted to the man at the wheel.

"All right," he nodded.

The other skipper raised an imploring hand toward the officer of the tug.

"One hundred dollars to take my schooner to Ful-

ton Market," he shouted from his boat.

The officer hesitated a moment. Before he could reply John Deane spoke, "You know your business,

captain. What are you going to do?"

"I can't take you, sir," the officer shouted back to the skipper of the *Harvest Home*. "I've agreed to take this man."

CHAPTER XI

MAKING GOOD

York harbor the Nimbus reached Gloucester, where we remained three days out-fitting the schooner for the Cape Shore trip. The southern spring fishing was over and the seining fleet was making ready for other scenes of endeavor. By the middle of May the schools of mackerel in their annual migration into northern waters were heading one part into the Gulf of Maine, another into the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The latter school of fish pass northeastward along the coasts of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island. It is at this season of the year that the seiners hope to make good catches on what they call the Cape Shore trip.

Word had reached Gloucester before our arrival of John Deane's strategy in outwitting the veteran Beers in the race to market. His good reputation for fighting out the storms while in southern waters, coupled with his boyhood experiences on the banks, now noised about by his friends, and the recent outwitting of his Comberton rival placed John Deane's name on every tongue. He was a newcomer among the skippers of the fleet, although his reputation as a fisherman was known favorably by several crews with whom he had

shared the toil and dangers of deep-sea fishing.

We learned ashore that as soon as Captain Beers returned to Comberton from a trip to the Magdalene Islands for herring he and Hinds had begun to outfit the grand-banker for seining. In his younger days Beers had a good deal of experience in seining porgies on the Maine coast; so it had been easy for Hinds to conclude that his crack fisherman could seine mackerel as readily as porgies. Hence the two had set about out-fitting the Harvest Home with so much zeal that Beers was enabled to make a trip to southern waters and by sheer good luck catch a deck load of mackerel. There was a pronounced opinion among the crew of the Nimbus that Beers had entered the mackerel fishery for no other purpose than to beat John Deane and win the prize offered by Seth Hinds. Both he and Hinds had personal reasons for keeping the prize from him. Time would tell.

Liverpool, a small harbor not far from Cape Sable, was the rendezvous of the American fishing fleet until the skippers should make inquiries regarding the appearance of the migrating schools of mackerel on the Cape Shore. We reached Liverpool on a Sunday morning and found a fleet of thirty mackerel seiners already there, mostly from the Gloucester fleet. A heavy fog settled down upon the little harbor that afternoon, effectively locking the fleet in port until clearer weather should allow them to issue forth again in search of mackerel. While the fleet remained at Liverpool an incident occurred which showed very clearly how Decatur Beers' sails were drawing and which hastened the oncoming of open hostility between the commanders of the Nimbus and the Harvest Home.

An afternoon of sports and games was planned by some of the younger skippers to furnish entertainment to the hundreds of American fishermen ashore at Liverpool. The affair had been suggested by Captain Beers in order to bring the young commander of the Nimbus into competition with the best athletes of the Gloucester fleet. John Deane's name was on everybody's tongue

because of his recent outwitting of Beers in the race to market; his reputation as an athlete was noised abroad among the crews until he became their hero, whether he was deserving the title or not. Always the name of Beers was associated with his and usually to the discredit of that worthy sea-dog's reputation. So Beers was eager to suggest the contests with the hope that his rival, being drawn into them by popular clamor, would be worsted by some athlete of the fleet. We were all ignorant of the plans which had been laid to involve our skipper in the contests and went along with him to the games, expecting an afternoon of unalloyed pleasure.

Half a thousand fishermen jostled each other good naturedly at the scene of the contests. It was a crowd of vikings drawn together from the north Atlantic fishing ports, "Down Easters" from Bucksport and North Haven, "Blue Noses" from Shelburne and Cape Negro, "P—I'S" from Souris or Tignish, stalwart Cape Breton Scotsmen from Port Hood, and the inevitable Newfoundlander whose cradle had been a dory. Of course Gloucester fishermen were there, but they were for the most part made up of bold men who have migrated to the place from other northern ports.

The athletic events started off with an uninteresting three-legged race. This was followed by a sack-race, which drew a dozen men from as many schooners, each man being swallowed to his arm pits in an immense gunny-sack and making all sorts of penguin-like movements to be the first to cross the line. A restless murmur came from the crowd after these preliminaries were over; they called for something "real men" could do. Those in charge of the games brought forth boxing gloves and, holding them up in sight of the crowd, called out, "Come on there, mates, bring up your John L's."

Several men whose known fighting abilities made them the admiration of their fellow shipmates, were urged to try on the gloves. Some of the fellows stepped forth willingly, others were thrust reluctantly into the open ring made by the assembled men. But there was evident disappointment among the crowd. The man for whom they were looking most eagerly was still in the sidelines and nobody had urged him to put on the gloves to try his skill against the crowd.

"Here, you Nimbus fellows, where's your champion?" one of the fishermen jeered at us. "Why don't you put up somebody instead of seeing all the fun and

giving none."

"Oh, don't you bail out your boat so fast, mister," responded Bill Spurling. "We'll furnish a man all right when you get some of this little fry out of the way."

Bill's ready wit raised a laugh against the other fellow. When the fistic contest had continued for half an hour and a stalwart giant from the Storm King had routed all who confronted him, the crowd was eager to have him contest the championship of the fleet with the skipper of the Nimbus.

"Now trot out your champion, old cock-eye," some-

one called out to Bill Spurling.

"That's right," called another fellow from the crowd, "put up your wonderful boy captain. He's such a marvel we want to get a look at his

spars."

All eyes centered on the crew of the Nimbus. We were standing together in a group watching the progress of the sports. It had not occurred to any of us yet that a plot had been laid to involve John Deane in the contests. Naturally we turned toward our skipper, awaiting his reply. Seeing that something was expected of him he stepped forward a little and said, "It

doesn't seem fair to this man who has just had three

men against him to take on a fresh one."

The crowd misinterpreted his motive. Before he could proceed further he was interrupted by several of them calling out together, "Don't be a quitter!" "Put up, or shut up!" and other cries that were far from respectable. It flashed over us in a moment what their game was. Skipper John understood, too, and his face flushed at the thought. It was dangerous business when the flush came to his cheeks, I had found that out long before. He turned sharply on the crowd.

"All right, you men, if you are ready so is the Nimbus crowd. We will put up a man, who is the youngest in our crew, probably the youngest in the crowd. We'll put him up against your champion. David Graham,

come here!"

I was fairly dazed with the unexpected turn of affairs. My own amazement was as nothing compared with the way John Deane's presentation of me was received by the crowd. They did not want me, they wanted John Deane; they looked upon it as an insult that the proven champion of the crowd should be called upon to box the youngest greenhorn in the fleet. Bill Spurling, who always had a way of doing the right thing at the proper time, came to the skipper's rescue.

"You fellows needn't feel so dispirited," he said, drawing his forefinger across his nasal port-holes, "to have your champion box this young fellow. I've seen him with the gloves on and I tell you there's nobody, except the skipper here who showed him how to box, can hold his face in front of him long and look natural. Trot out your champion. The Nimbus ain't so hard put that she's got to spread all her canvas on the main-

mast."

While they were putting the gloves on my hands Lew

Mills said to me, "You're up against the Belfast Fog-

horn,' boy."

"Who's he?" I inquired, anxious to learn all that was possible about my unexpected opponent. For I had a wholesome respect for him after watching him

overcome his competitors so easily.

"Oh, he's a local celebrity of Penobscot Bay," Lew replied. "He lives in Belfast and has a voice like a foghorn. They say he goes down to the wharf in Belfast on calm days and talks across the bay to folks in Castine. He has got a terrible chest on him and is strong as an ox. But I never heard that he is much of a boxer. It'll be brute force against skill, so play your game carefully."

My opponent had the advantage of strength, maturity and weight. When we faced each other I firmly resolved to use my agility and skill, and to play a waiting game. As we thrust our arms out toward each other Lew Mills called out to me, quite contrary to his advice and against my own thinking, "Lay into him, Pitch! Remember what you did to old man Hinds." That spoiled all my good intentions. In a flash the scene of the barn floor swept into my mind, there came a streak of red across my vision, and from that moment until the finish I was in the power of my demons.

They say we fought a great battle, that there was a continuous mixup, that I was knocked about easily whenever I came within range of my opponent's powerful blows, that I ducked and dodged, feinted and side-stepped, blocked his rushes and slid easily beneath his great arms. Several times I was knocked down only to be back on my feet and at the "Foghorn" fiercer than a wildcat. There was never a second when the contest lagged and the big crowd that formed the human rope enclosing the boxing ring cheered and

yelled itself hoarse with indiscriminate admiration. And yet I knew little of what was really taking place. It was only after my opponent momentarily lowered his guard and I landed full and with the weight of my whole body, upon the point of his jaw that I began to see things clearly. The pride of the Storm King toppled backward in a heap. He was on his feet shortly, but the contest was never the same thereafter. I had only to use my skill, to sidestep his rushes and place my blows where I would. My opponent kept doggedly at it but he was only inviting a knockout blow from the time he first toppled over - for I evened up some of the times that he had sent me to the dust before the end came. The man was getting up groggily from one of my knockdown blows when John Deane stepped forward and said to me, "That is enough, David. You've whipped him and there's no need of punishing him further."

Without a moment's hesitation I began to draw off the gloves. At this several fellows in the crowd set up a protest and called out to finish the bout with a knockout round.

"The 'Foghorn' is the winner," shouted Decatur Beers eagerly. "The kid has taken off his gloves and that's a sign that he's a quitter." He jeered at us and was joined by several of his crowd. Another part of the crowd shouted, "Enough! Deane is right and it's the boy's fight."

But Beers was out for trouble. He persisted in his shouts and jeering, finally calling out during a momentary pause in the shouting, "He is a quitter and

always was!"

With that I rushed across the ring and struck him full in the face with my bare fist. The blow would have made an impression upon most men but Decatur Beers was too hardened and tough for that. He grabbed hold of me, we clinched and were in the beginning of an interesting pummeling of each other at short range when John Deane seized us by our collars and sent us spinning apart as if we were toys in his hands. I toppled over backwards but rose to my feet in time to see 'Cate Beers sprawled face downward a dozen feet away where he had been hurled by the giant strength of our skipper. Bad blood was beginning to get warm in the crowd right off. Beers staggered to his feet, wiping the dirt and grime from his eyes. He was in an ugly mood. He advanced slowly toward our hero, chagrined and discomfited but not beaten.

"That's a dirty dog's trick!" He started to say more but checked himself as John Deane stepped toward him. Then Deane turned upon the crowd, his eyes blazing with fury. He stood with shoulders squared and head uplifted among them, his jaws set and fists clenched. He turned his eyes to meet those of the crowd, and there was no man of them who cared to try issue with him after seeing him fling Beers and

me about like toys.

"Now if there's anything else you fellows want the crew of the Nimbus to tackle we are ready for you," he cried out defiantly. "Bring up your men and we'll take them on, only there's got to be clean sport and fair play."

It was an awkward moment until several skippers stepped forward to assure him that they stood for fair play and to state that they approved of his interven-

tion of the boxing bout.

"It belonged to the boy all right, as any fair minded man could see, and it was fine for you to put a stop to it," one of them stated. Another of their number told him frankly that he had the reputation of being the best athlete in the American fleet and suggested that there could be no harm in pitting himself against some

of the other strong men of the fleet.

"I'm ready for anything that is fair and square, and so is my crew," responded the skipper. "The crew of the Nimbus will do their part to make things interesting." It was a challenge to the whole fishing fleet, if any cared to consider it as such. Nobody did until the wrestling matches were on. Other events followed the boxing contest, but the chief interest centered in the wrestling which was scheduled for the last event of the sports.

There is little need to give the details of various matches that were tried out before all other contestants had been outdone in turn by a strapping fellow from the Eben Lewis, Davis by name. He was left to contest with John Deane the title of master wrestler among half a thousand rugged fishermen, for by common understanding the crowd looked to our skipper to enter

the lists in the last round of the day.

Again the crowd formed a great ring around the contestants, only on this occasion there were few calls from the onlookers. Admiration for John Deane was evident everywhere; also there was an uneasiness in the minds of the men little short of anxiety lest he be worsted in a contest which required tremendous physical strength to be victor. Davis stepped forward fresh from his last conquest, not a little elated to have the honor of being matched against the skipper of the Nimbus. If he won, the crowd would have little use for the Comberton captain; perhaps less for the man who should defeat him, for Davis had little to commend himself to popular favor beyond his brute strength. It was expected that John Deane would win, yet it looked grave for his cause when one surveyed the athletic representative from the Eben Lewis.

The contestants approached each other and locked arms, each taking a right underhold. At a word from the umpire the struggle began. Neither man stirred from his tracks after the signal. All that the onlookers could see was a tightening of the arms about each other as they two came to close hugs. I stood where I could look into the face of Davis. As the muscles tightened I noticed a peculiar look come over his countenance, puzzled and grave, then without a word, and to the utter astonishment of all, his hold relaxed and he sank to the ground at John Deane's feet. The skipper stood above him unmoved by the strange occurrence. The crowd awed by the uncanny deed remained silent, awaiting an explanation of what had happened.

Afterwards George Keene told me that he was standing near 'Cate Beers when Davis was trying to get to his feet again and overheard him mutter, "Heaven help the fellow that falls into his clutches," referring to Deane. Perhaps he was recalling to mind what had happened in the hold of the *Harvest Home*

five summers previously.

"That's your round all right, captain," said Davis, when he had got control of himself. "But if you don't

mind I'd like to try it once more."

The two clinched again. At the word from the referee John Deane fell to his task in earnest. His muscles bulged, his arms tightened about Davis' body, he crushed the other man's arms into his sides and held them as if they were in a vice. Then he gave a mighty hug which raised Davis off his feet into the air. The victim relaxed his hold, collapsed in his opponent's arms and emitted a noise from his throat that resembled the squawking of a barnyard full of fowls. The crowd of men were convulsed with the squawk, they tried to imitate it as the victim fell to the ground, and burst into loud peals of laughter.

Then the men turned on John Deane. They shouted and cheered, they pressed about him, slapped him familiarly on the back and followed him to his boat as we pulled him away to the Nimbus. Dozens of them came aboard to have a closer look at the hero and to rehearse with us the story of the afternoon. After that there was nobody denying him the place as leader of the mackerel fleet. His pupil had worsted the best boxer on the fleet, his rival had been hurled with a giant's strength to the ground, and Davis, the champion of the Eben Lewis, had been crushed like a straw man.

In the evening one of the crew of the Eben Lewis hung around the deck for some time trying to find a chance to speak with John Deane in private. Finally he summoned courage to say that he would like to speak to the skipper.

"All right, my man, say what you want. I have nothing that I do not share with my men," replied the

skipper.

"I only wanted to say," the fellow said in a low voice, "that one of the Comberton fellows in the Harvest Home asked me to tell you that 'Cate Beers is in the mackerel fleet to do you dirty. Look out for him all the time."

Captain Beers began his work the following morning.

CHAPTER XII

A SURPRISING CATCH

THEN the fog began to lift off the harbor on Tuesday morning the American fleet got under way. Not a breath of air was stirring. The sails when hoisted hung limp and lifeless from the yards. It was another case of resorting to the ash breeze. Slowly schooner after schooner left port in tow of their seine-boats. We were among the last to leave harbor, not because Lew Mills did not have us up as early as the other crews — he had the reputation of serving the earliest breakfasts in the fleet but because there appeared to be little virtue of hurrying when the ash oar was the only means of propulsion. The fleet must get outside the harbor, that was a foregone conclusion when the fog began to lift off the water. There is no excuse for a fleet to lie at anchor when the seas are smooth and the weather clear; outside, there is always the possibility of getting a breath of air to fill the upper sails, at least.

It was a pretty sight that morning to watch the mackerel schooners get under way and, under the propelling oars, move slowly and majestically into the deeper water. The American fishing schooner is the most seaworthy craft of her size afloat. Modern schooners are built on lines of easy curves, combining both beauty and service in their structure. They carry a big spread of canvas, with long, protruding bowsprit and lofty masts. One by one they passed the Nimbus and there were moments when I wished our own Nimbus was of a more up-to-date build. The idea

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flashed into the mind for a moment only; it was suppressed instantly with the thought that no other schooner had a commander whom we would think of exchanging for our skipper. Other schooners made a prettier picture on the quiet waters or could sail faster in a mild breeze; but when John Deane stood at the wheel of the Nimbus in a gale of wind, that was picture

enough to satisfy every man aboard.

The fleet of schooners strung out in a long line, in every case a seine-boat towing its vessel. Captain Deane and four of the crew remained aboard the ship while the rest of us pulled at the oars. It was a long, wearying pull. Time went on without a change. No light breeze of wind met us at the harbor's mouth. The day was turning out to be pleasant and warm, a most welcome change from the past few days. Two and one-half hours passed with no relief at the oars. Suddenly our monotonous peace was disturbed by a commotion among the schooners ahead. One of the seine-boats stopped rowing and pulled back to her schooner.

"It's Eben Lewis. He is going out in his boat," called the lookout from aloft.

Captain Lewis had discovered a school of fish, good news for the whole fleet to hear. In a few minutes he began to set his seine. We renewed our efforts at the oars. Scarcely ten minutes passed when the skipper called to us, "Bring in the boat." The towing hawser was cast off in a hurry and we pulled back to the Nimbus.

"Call the cook! Get into the boat! Let that hawser go now! Shove off!" were the orders from Skipper John in rapid succession.

We pulled away at the oars, speeding the light boat forward at a fast clip now that she was freed from

the heavy schooner.

"Easy on the oars there! Pull away again! Get

your seine ready!" cried the skipper.

We were all wondering what was the matter with our captain. The sea was glass, there was no ruffle on the surface, no sign of a school of mackerel anywhere near our schooner or boat. Yet the skipper was acting as if he would make a setting of the seine in the midst of the empty, calm spaces all about us. We had pulled away from the Nimbus five hundred yards. Skipper John stood on the seine intently scanning the water ahead with Ranny MacDonald at the steering oar. While we rested on our oars everybody looked about for signs of schooling mackerel. Except from the wake of the seine-boat the water reflected a mirror's surface. John Deane gave order to pull ahead on the oars. He stepped back and took the oar from Ranny's hand, then called out to the seine-heaver, "Let go your twine!"

What folly! Setting the seine in water as calm as a millpond, with sixteen men ready to take oath that no mackerel were in the vicinity and had not been all the morning. It was not our part to demur. This was the skipper's business, the setting of the seine, so we pulled heartily, if skeptically, about the calm spot which was disturbed only by the whirl from our oars and the bights of seine being flung into the innocent sea.

"Great humping hemlock! Look at that!" exclaimed one of the "forward guards," as we called the men who had berths in the forecastle. Mackerel were coming to the surface. It was a sight to gladden any heart, mackerel schooling within the circle of twine, not a few of them but a black, squirming host of them, coming to the surface in great numbers, pouring up from below, crowding upon each other in desperation and making the water rough with their flipping and twisting about. How we bent to the oars! Two and one-half hours of rowing before this, but now we were

rowing. Quickly we made the circle, set the davits in place, passed the purse-line through the blocks and

seized hold of either end to sway back upon it.

Then our troubles began. The headrope of the seine broke under the heavy strain to which it was subjected and had to be caught and tied. We were still in shallow water, scarcely three miles from the shore. The seine reached to bottom and dragged over the rocks, tearing the footrope and twine. It was because the seine reached bottom and the fish could find no exit below that they had rushed in so great numbers to the surface.

While we were struggling to regain the broken headrope and having difficulty with the seine dragging and
tearing on bottom the mackerel were pouring over the
corks of the seine opposite the boat and escaping into
the sea. They came to the top in so great a mass that
the corks and seine were forced under water by the
sheer weight of their numbers. The skipper hurriedly
leaped into the dory and rowed around to the place
where the mackerel were escaping. He tried to get
hold of the submerged part of the seine but it was too
deep in the water for him to reach.

"A solid wall of mackerel is coming over the seine here!" he exclaimed; "hurry up with that pursing!"

When he found that he could not reach the top of the submerged seine the skipper stood in the dory and speared the oars down among the escaping mackerel to drive them back into the seine. For a time his efforts were of no avail; but after hundreds of barrels of the fish had escaped into the open water the weight upon the seine was reduced enough to allow the corks to rise to the surface and shut off further loss from that quarter.

Then new places for escape were opened. The seine was badly torn by being drawn across the rocks of the

bottom. Through these rents the mackerel poured into the sea. We pulled away desperately to get the seine pursed up and the extra twine dried in before all the school should be lost. It was a slow task, however, with the difficulties under which we worked, to purse up the seine.

When the schooner had been made fast to the seine our first concern was to place the "pocket" about it. This is a stout net made to place about the seine when it contains a large school of mackerel, or is damaged, to prevent the seine from tearing open and allowing the fish to escape. While we were getting the pocket about the seine more mackerel escaped through new rents made in the seine. We seemed fated not to save any part of the school that morning. The skipper declared that a thousand barrels of mackerel must have gone over the corks before they came to the surface; nobody knows how many barrels of fish escaped through the rents near the footrope or again when we were attempting to get the pocket about the seine. Had we been able to save all the fish in the school there would have been enough to load two schooners to the gunwales.

It was a long time before we were ready to bail the mackerel aboard the schooner. Lew Mills took the big dipnet, plunged it among the mottled fish and gave the signal to go ahead on the toppinglift halyards. Up came a barrel of the beauties to be dumped upon deck. How good they looked after our long labor in taking them! They flipped about deck, slid over to port, filled the waist of the schooner to overflowing and then slipped aft across the brake until they were checked by gib-keelers which the skipper placed on deck to keep the fish in a compact heap.

All the time the jib was hanging in a heap on the bowsprit, the jumbo and foresail were drawn to port, the foregaff dropped, and we knew well enough that the

men aboard the other schooners were saying, "The

lucky Nimbus has got another load of them."

With the last dipnetful of mackerel over the rail the cook disappeared into the forecastle to prepare dinner. We had time to look about us a little while we were hoisting the headsails into place. The mackerel were rounded on deck from rail to rail, a hundred and fifty barrels strong.

"That's a pretty fine morning's work anyway," said Clint Blunt after we had got the gib-keelers set up and begun the work of dressing down the catch. "What I would like to know is how the skipper knew there was mackerel down there? Nobody else saw a sign of fish and there wasn't so much as a ripple on the surface."

The rest of us were equally puzzled. We could explain the mystery only by assuming that the skipper detected a difference in the color of the water made by the presence of a large body of mackerel below the surface. It was indeed a surprising catch; but not so

great a surprise as awaited us.

Further comment on the subject was cut short by one of the men pointing ahead of the Nimbus. By this time the fleet had got a long way ahead of us in a light puff of wind, leaving the schooner quite alone. Nearer to us, not half a mile away, a steam yacht was headed toward the Nimbus. As she came nearer we made out the ensign of Great Britain flying at the masthead, lazily but ominously.

"It's the Canadian revenue cutter," said Clint.

"Now we are in for it."

When the cutter got near us a boat was lowered from her side and pulled to the *Nimbus*. We caught the painter as it was thrown over the rail. An officer in uniform stepped on deck. He glanced at the great heaps of mackerel about him before inquring, "Who is the commander here?"

Skipper John acknowledged his office with a salute

and a respectful, "Here, sir."

The officer returned the salute before replying, "Captain, it is my painful duty to seize your schooner and cargo for fishing within the three-mile limit, in violation of the treaty rights of the Canadian government. Kindly bring me the ship's papers!"

CHAPTER XIII

BILL SPURLING'S MUTINY

TE would not have been more surprised aboard the ship had a whale swallowed the Nimbus, cargo, crew and all. We looked at each other in blank amazement, then at the skipper. It meant ruin for him, ruin for Captain Ober, owner of the schooner, ruin to our summer's work. The Nimbus was really swallowed up with her equipment and stores and cargo. This included the fine deck of mackerel we had just succeeded in getting aboard the schooner after five hours of discouraging labor. Looked at from our point of view the capture of the Nimbus was trifling, an inconvenience of a few weeks and a loss of only half a hundred dollars each. But for the skipper it was a very serious business. He would need to pay rental on the schooner five months longer with the vessel in the hands of the Canadian government. He was ruined almost before he had a chance to make a good start.

"Sir, your seizure is illegal," he said to the officer when he had recovered somewhat from the shock. "Our catch was made outside the three-mile limit. I'm positive of that because my crew towed the schooner for two and a half hours before we set the seine."

"We capture you at this spot, which is within the three-mile limit," replied the officer. "You cannot deny that you have just finished getting your mackerel on deck, can you?"

"No, sir. We have just finished bailing in the fish.

But we have been in the seine-boat and busy bailing the fish fully two hours. Possibly the tide has carried us away from the place where we took the fish. I have not noticed how we have been drifting; we could not have prevented drifting had we tried. We had no intention to trespass within Canadian waters and we did not trespass."

"My instructions make no mention of intentions. We take as lawful prizes any fishing craft found trespassing within the three-mile limit. To find your schooner here, just finishing bailing in a load of mackerel, is circumstantial evidence which the admiralty court would accept in a decision to hold your schooner, its cargo and

equipment."

"But I protest that the seizure is illegal," declared

Skipper John.

"It will be proper for you to enter your protest in due form before the court at Halifax, captain. Your vessel will have to accompany me to Halifax."

"What about this deckload of mackerel?" the skip-

per asked, pointing to the fish.

"The fish are seized along with the schooner. The law specifies that ship, cargo and equipment become the

property of her Majesty's government."

Bill Spurling snorted outright at this. "Huh! Her Majesty's nothing; that's all rot, Mr. Officer. How much do you and your crew get out of this capture? Tell me that?"

The officer glanced at Bill in disgust. He was not used to having fishermen question him on points of the law or to interfere in a matter that was none of their business.

"Captain," he said, "my business is with you. Please understand that ship, cargo and equipment are now in the hands of the Canadian government. We need not parley longer. Get the schooner in sailing

trim to accompany me to Halifax. I will send an officer and prize crew aboard to remain on the schooner until we reach Halifax."

The skipper turned to us. We were standing about the deck where we could in the midst of the mackerel,

eagerly taking in the conversation.

"It looks as if we would have to go to Halifax, men, and get satisfaction there. We shall have little difficulty in convincing the admiralty court that the Nimbus was outside the three-mile limit when the fish were taken."

"We'll all swear to that, skipper," spoke up George Keene. "I've sailed these waters for thirty years and know pretty well whether we are three or five miles off shore."

"Well, set the outer jib and topsails, men. Let's get to Halifax as soon as possible and get this matter

fixed right."

The crew turned slowly to obey the skipper's orders. We did not care much what we did so long as we did something. It was a blue set of men who picked their way forward through the heaps of mackerel, now no longer ours, to set the sails. Before we had got far Bill Spurling who was standing on the forehatch - a kind of island amid a sea of mackerel - turned to Skipper John and cried out loud enough for every man to hear, "Skipper, I don't turn my hand over to set one of them dam'd sails!"

Skipper John was touched to the quick by Bill's open defiance to his orders. To lose the schooner was a matter of dollars and cents, to lose the respect of his men was a bitter disappointment to John Deane. It touched him personally, not financially. It showed Bill to be good fellow in fair weather, but an ingrate when stormy weather appeared.

"Bill, what is the matter?" the skipper inquired.

"Why do you stand up like a man when everything goes well and play the boy as soon as we get into trouble?"

"Skipper, don't you take one thing from me as being against you. I'll stand by you till hell cracks and the sulphur runs all over Nova Scotia, if necessary. But this is none of our affair now, skipper. Are you in command of the Nimbus?"

This was a new turn to the seizure that the skipper had not foreseen but the right of which he recognized once it was called to his attention by Bill.

"You're right, Bill. I am no longer in command of the Nimbus. You men have no need to obey me longer. But I thought—"

At this point the skipper was interrupted by the revenue officer. "Excuse, me, captain. The man is right. You are no longer in command of the schooner. But I am and I order your men to set the jibs and topsails."

The man's intentions were better than his tact. If one man was in mutiny before this, now seventeen were. Bill became so angry at the officer's words that he could make no reply for a moment. He spat spitefully at the mackerel, and his watery eye poured forth a libation of patriotic liquid down his left cheek that made Bill appear ludicrous in his anger. When he recovered his self-control he fairly roared back his reply to the officer, for Bill had a voice that could roar upon occasion; he had a courage that no officer's uniform could deter and he was possessed of a very practical knowledge of maritime law and practice.

"You lobster-faced Blue Nose!" Bill roared. "You can order till your face is as red as your flag and that's all the good it will do. Don't you suppose we fishermen have got rights? Don't you suppose we know what our rights are? Take this old tub if you want to, and the boats and sails and gurry-tubs and this deck

of fish, too. Take them and tow them right up alongside of the Queen's throne, for all of me. But don't you boss me, nor order me, nor do anything to me except to give me safe conduct to the nearest American consul. You can seize a ship illegally but you can't seize an American fisherman illegally, or in any other way. I'm an American fisherman and, by the great horned spoon, the first Blue Nose that lays hand on Bill Spurling has to settle with his friend Uncle Samuel, at Washington."

"Hurrah for you, Bill!" shouted Lew Parish, stirred to a pitch of emotion by Bill's harangue. The effect of Bill's speech was electrical. It gave encouragement to the crew at a moment of depression, it put a new light in John Deane's eyes, and showed the officer clearly that he had exceeded his authority. The crew followed Lew Parish's example and gave the speaker a hearty cheer at the close of his retort. The officer turned to John

Deane.

"It would be unfortunate for us to have trouble over this affair, sir. I will put a prize crew aboard the schooner but we are short handed. If some of your men will assist in handling the schooner we shall be glad to pay them for their services."

"That sounds right," the skipper answered. "My men are disappointed this morning. They lose a good catch of fish as well as a summer's work in the fishery. That is enough to irritate any man. But may I inquire what you expect to do with these mackerel?"

The officer hesitated before making a reply. He had not thought about the mackerel, or that they needed

immediate attention.

"I suppose they should be saved. What do you think they are worth?"

"About fifteen hundred dollars in Halifax, fully one-

fifth the value of the schooner herself," replied Skipper John.

"Oh, so much as that? Why, by all means have them saved. Set the crew at work dressing them at once."

The irrepressible sea-lawyer could restrain himself no longer. He still maintained his independent station and attitude. When the officer of the cutter suggested that our crew attend to the dressing of the fish it was a

presumption that Bill would not brook.

"Yes, I see just about eighteen of us fellows splitting and gibbing and plowing a hundred and fifty odd barrels of mackerel out of love for you fellows," Bill said. "Where do we come in? Five hours of work such as your lily whites haven't done in forty years, if I am any judge of hands, five hours of work to catch the fish and another ten hours to dress them properly. Bill Spurling's hands are just itching to split mackerel under those conditions. What do you say, men? Work our fingers to the bone for a lot of men that take our schooner and mackerel away from us illegally? Well, I guess not this trip, mister. You don't know American fishermen if you think they are slaves to anybody."

"What are the fish worth to you, sir?" John Deane

inquired of the officer.

"That is a detail I am not interested in. My business is to do my duty as an officer, not as a fisherman."

"Just as you say. It's nothing to us now. In six hours the mackerel won't be worth dumping overboard if they remain here on deck. Dress them and it is half of fifteen hundred dollars to be shared by you and your crew."

The officer made a rapid calculation before replying. The results of his mental arithmetic were pleasing to him, especially as officers share more than their crew.

"Why, of course the mackerel should be saved. We are willing to allow seamen's wages to your crew for

dressing them."

Bill took it upon himself to be our spokesman. "We'll do the job all right, skipper, but no seamen's wages. This is expert work. What kind of a mess would these men make of the job? They wouldn't finish it until some time next August. I think five dollars a man, with double share to the skipper as usual, is a fair rate for the job. How does it strike you fellows?"

Bill turned to us and we nodded assent. Five dollars was better than loafing around ship for the remainder of the day; besides, it was more than the average man of the fleet would earn that day. The officer was not so easily convinced. He so far forgot his dignity as to address Bill himself.

"Nothing more or less than highway robbery. You men never earned five dollars a day in your life. What is the sense of claiming expert wages in the matter of

dressing a deck load of mackerel?"

"Suit yourself, sir," answered Skipper John. "I figure that you and your crew will divide about eight hundred dollars among you if you get the fish to Halifax in good condition. Throw eight hundred dollars overboard if you wish to, or pay us a hundred and save seven hundred for yourselves. Is that sense?"

"I agree to the conditions, captain," replied the officer, glad to have somebody do his figuring for him and

reluctant to allow the fish to spoil.

"When will the pay be forthcoming for the job?" inquired the skipper, anxious to seal the bargain properly.

"As soon as the fish are dressed. I don't usually pay for a thing until I get it," the other responded,

A young officer accompanied by four sailors came aboard to direct the sailing of the schooner but they did not interfere with the work in which we were engaged. There was little conversation among the crew for the remainder of the day. From time to time one of our crew would slam an unoffending mackerel into the barrel with a bang that never would have been tolerated had we been dressing the fish for ourselves. Then a bystander would remark, in mock reproach at his shipmate, "Careful, there, boy! Don't harm the gentleman's fish!"

Our work was only half completed when the cook summoned us to supper at three in the afternoon. I was ready to resign my job, for my hands were getting sore and numb with the work of gibbing the mackerel. We kept on with the job we had begun, of course, and when darkness came on set up the torches about deck to give us light to do the work. The men were not slow to see the ludicrous side of the predicament in which we were placed. John Cameron, the bight-passer, a canny Scotsman from the Port Hood region, gave a touch of Scotch humor to the situation. After the torches had been lighted and we could see other schooners a dozen miles to the eastward with torches lighted, Cameron remarked with a touch of profanity and bitterness quite foreign to his ordinary self, "Those fellows over aboard the other schooners are saying to each other, 'What a helluva big school of fish the Nimbus has got. They're the lucky dogs of the fleet."

But Cameron did not know at that time, nor anybody else aboard the *Nimbus*, that some of the American fishermen in the fleet to the eastward thought differently about the kind of luck we were having.

It was mid-forenoon of the next day before the officer of the cutter boarded the *Nimbus* again. After he and the skipper had exchanged greetings Skipper John called his attention to the mackerel which were packed about the deck from windlass to the wheel house, one

hundred and sixty-five water-barrels in all.

"There are your fish, sir, all dressed and soaking out the blood, one hundred and sixty-five barrels of them. They should make a hundred and fifty headed barrels. It would be convenient to receive the men's pay at this time."

The officer looked sharply at John Deane, then at the

barrels of mackerel, before replying.

"I may be green, sir, but I know enough of the mackerel business to tell when they are properly dressed. The fish have to be salted down, headed up and stowed away in the hold of the schooner before your

crew can expect pay for the job."

On the moment we were incensed at the officer. John Deane was deeply stirred, too, but he made an effort to control himself. He spoke carefully when he replied, although one could see that he held himself in check with great restraint. He had assured us of our pay; the officer's refusal to pay us until further work was done placed him in a bad light.

"The terms of agreement were that you would pay us one hundred dollars for dressing the fish. There they are, dressed good enough for any crew. Nothing was said about further work upon the fish, or stowing them in the hold, or hoisting them on the wharf at Halifax or finding a market for them after we reached port. You will oblige me by payment of the money."

"And I will oblige myself by withholding the pay

"And I will oblige myself by withholding the pay until the fish are in the condition I expect them to be," replied the officer with no little show of being irritated.

"Very well, sir. I thought a Britisher's word was as good as his bond. Canadian fishermen whom I have met are of a different type from you. Come here, Bill."

As he spoke, John Deane stepped toward the barrels

of mackerel that were stowed against the rail. He and Bill Spurling stooped down, grasped a barrel of mackerel by the chine and middle and before the astonished officer could interpose or say a word they threw the barrel of fish overboard. They seized another barrel, which was hurled after the first, sinking into the waves with a big splash and leaving a wake of white bubbles as it quickly sank from sight. A third barrel was half way over the rail before the officer could speak.

"Halt! Hold up there! What are you doing? Those fish belong to the Canadian government. I order you to leave them alone!" He was fairly choking with

rage and astonishment at John Deane's action.

The skipper paused with the barrel tilting on the rail. "These fish were caught outside the three-mile limit," he said. "They were dressed by my crew in an agreement with you. When you refuse to fulfill your part of the agreement you forfeit your right to the dressed mackerel. There are not men enough aboard your cutter to prevent us from dumping the cargo into the ocean. And that's just what we are going to do."

When John Deane was thoroughly aroused he spoke his words sharply and the flash of his eye spoke volumes more than the words. He felt that he was in the right, he knew that he had the situation in his hands. When he had finished speaking he and Bill heaved the third barrel overboard, this time a long way from the ship's side. I have often wondered just how far he could have thrown the officer at that moment had the occasion allowed him a trial.

At the skipper's words we all sprang to the rail. In another moment barrels of mackerel were being dumped overboard from every quarter of the schooner. The spirit of the Boston Tea Party was rife aboard the Nimbus, though five of the crew were Canadians. The officer gave a hurried look about the deck. On all sides

he saw barrels of mackerel disappearing over the rail and eighteen men in pairs doing the job with alacrity and ease. He raised both hands in protest and shouted.

"Hold up! I'll pay the wages now. Don't waste

more fish."

He drew a bill-book from an inner pocket and counted a hundred dollars into John Deane's hand.

"Thank you, officer," said our captain. "Now I think the men will attend to the salting and heading of the mackerel without further trouble. Am I right, men?"

"Right you are, skipper," answered George Keene. "All we ask is fair play and full pay." He put his words into action by taking his adz from the fife-rail

and began to head up the barrels.

Because of light winds we had made little headway throughout the night. With the coming of morning a breeze set in from the eastward, the forerunner of a northeast gale if we were judges of the weather. By mid-afternoon the breeze had freshened to a respectable gale, accompanied by a driving rainstorm. Our little craft tacked to and fro in its laborious progress in beating to windward. All the time the cutter kept close watch over the schooner and her crew.

The last stretch into Halifax harbor was made on the starboard tack with our lee rail awash. Darkness was settling upon the waters when we entered Halifax harbor a disconsolate crew indeed, defeated of the high hopes we had had of making a record trip to market. The cold, drenching rain added discomfort to the disgrace that we felt in entering a foreign port as prisoners - so far as schooner and equipment and cargo were concerned — of a Canadian revenue cutter.

All the afternoon I had felt strange sensations running up and down my back. As the peculiar sensations darted about and pricked me I realized that the little demons of my youth were astir within me seeking an opportunity to find expression. I was in no mood to repel their advances. I could easily have set fire to schooner and cargo that day but maturer reflection suggested that it would be wiser to attempt to save property than destroy it. Before we entered the harbor I had a long talk with Lew Mills and Bill Spurling up forward by the windlass. Later I managed to get a few words with the skipper without arousing suspicion that anything unusual was on foot. Bill and George Keene, the veteran seamen of our crew, kept their eyes open as the schooner entered the harbor under command of the prize crew; they had been familiar with Halifax harbor for many years but took pains to refresh their memories as we went along. There was little cause for comment when Skipper John gave orders for the port anchor to be made ready for mooring the schooner. When the command came to anchor, it was the port anchor that was cast from the bow, the one fitted with a hawser instead of chain. As the port anchor rushed into the water my demons gave evidence of exultant re-

John Deane called his crew about him and said, "You men are no longer bound to help about the schooner. Pack up your duds to-night; in the morning we'll go ashore to the American consul. I'm going ashore to see him now. While I am away, take orders from Bill Spurling."

CHAPTER XIV

THE ESCAPE

Several conditions favored our plan to seize the schooner and make our escape. The night was intensely dark. The wind and storm were making a noise which would prevent easy communication between the cutter and the schooner, although the Beetle was anchored scarcely three hundred feet away. It would seem the height of folly for any one to attempt to take the schooner out of Halifax harbor on such a night; yet we decided it would be better to try, even though we should fail, than not to take the risk, since we had everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Skipper John had gone ashore with the officer of the cutter. The wildest imagination would not picture a crew making off with the schooner and leaving their captain ashore in the hands of the enemy. Yet we relied upon this bit of strategy more than anything else to allay any suspicions that an attempt would be made to capture the schooner. Skipper John was only too willing to do his part in the plan, provided the schooner

might be rescued from her captors.

The mooring of the Nimbus with the port anchor, which had hemp cable instead of chain, was part of the strategy already accomplished. It remained for us to keep some of the larger sails on the schooner, if possible, until we were ready to cut the cable and make a quick escape. That detail I had left to Bill Spurling's diplomacy.

When Captain Deane disappeared in the darkness

for the shore Bill told the men they might go below as there was no other work for them to do. This left the furling of all the sails to the prize crew of four men and an officer. Bill knew well enough that they could not do the work unassisted by the crew of the Nimbus. The officer gave orders for the jib and jumbo to be taken in first. His men moved forward in the darkness and undertook to carry out his commands. But they were unfamiliar with the rigging of the schooner. In the darkness they could not distinguish halyard from down-haul or tell where to find the different ropes. They got helplessly tangled up, fell over the cable, ran against the windlass, loosened the topsail halyard but failed to find the ropes they were looking for. They returned after a time to inform the officer that they needed a torch to find the ropes. The officer, also helpless aboard the schooner, turned to Bill to inquire where a torch or lantern might be found.

"Deliver me, officer. I couldn't lay my hand on a torch if it was cut off at the elbow," Bill replied with very evident truthfulness. "What do they want of

torches anyway?"

"They say they cannot find the ropes in the dark. Your crew are unwilling to help us and my men are

strangers to the rigging."

"What do you want to take in the sails for now, anyway?" inquired Bill. "What's the use of rolling up a big wad of water, the canvas is soaked with rain?"

"We cannot ride at anchor with all the lower sails set, can we?" the officer replied, half in explanation of his order and partly to inquire what Bill would do under the circumstances.

"I suppose not," Bill replied. "We are so used to keeping all sails on that it doesn't seem seamen-like to furl them as soon as we get into port. Perhaps it would be all right to furl the headsails, the schooner would

ride at anchor better. If I was doing the job I'd let the foresail and mainsail hang until morning. They'll steady the schooner in the storm. Besides you could never roll up the mainsail with all that water in it."

"I think we will furl the headsails, anyway," the officer said. "We can attend to the larger sails when

the commander comes aboard again."

"You could do worse than that, my way of thinking, officer," answered Bill. "It's a big job for four men to handle that mainsail in the dark and heavy as lead. I guess we can lend a hand up forward, can't we, boys?" Bill inquired of a few of us who were on deck.

We agreed to the suggestion, for it was helping out our plans to have Bill take charge of the situation. Down came the jib and jumbo. Bill handled the gaskets in diplomatic fashion. Instead of winding them around and around the sails to keep them from flying about in the gale he made a pretense at passing the gaskets about the sails and fastened the end of the ropes with a knot that could be loosened quickly when the time for action should come.

"Better trim the big sails aft, hadn't we, officer?" inquired Bill solicitously when the forward sails had been cared for. The officer assented. We pulled in the sheets and made them secure, without using either the boom-tackles or boom-crotch for the work. With the headsails down the schooner rode easily at anchor, satisfactorily enough to ease the mind of the officer for the time being at least.

When the sails had been attended to the watch was set, two men in each watch for four hours on and four hours off for the night. At Clint's invitation the officer of the day disappeared in the cabin after he had taken a last look around to see that everything had been made snug for the night. The other two men whose

watch would not come for four hours found a retreat from the storm in the forecastle.

For the time Bill, Lew Mills and I remained near the mainhatch maturing our plans. There was need of great haste if we were to escape from the harbor before the commander of the cutter should return from the shore. His first order would be to furl the lower sails and that would put an end to our schemes. We had taken several of the crew into our secret, - Lee Parish, Clint, George Keene, who with Bill would have to navigate the schooner out of the harbor, John Cameron and Ranny MacDonald. Each man had been assigned a part to do, Bill and George to navigate the schooner, Clint to entertain the officer - Clint was a native of Cape Negro and always had a fund of quaint stories on tap — the other four men were to handle the two watchmen. It was my part to keep the affair running smoothly and give the word when to overpower the watchman and to cut the cable. A critical seaman might have inquired why we needed the binnacle light burning after the schooner was riding at anchor. Yet this was a detail that had been foreseen and Clint. furthermore, was instructed to extinguish the cabin lamp when we should get under way.

It was no occasion for suspicion when Bill Spurling went up forward shortly to see how the cable was wearing. He spoke to the forward watch as he went by him "wondering why the schooner pulled so hard at her anchor." He busied himself for a few minutes with a pretended inspection at the hawse-pipe before calling out to me, "Bring up some seizings from the forecastle, Pitchfork, the hawser is wearing a little in the pipe."

I secured a good bunch of seizings which I carried to Bill. In the bundle were about ten fathoms of three-ply rope, and a big knife from the cook's pantry shelf. We passed one end of the rope over the rail, drew it

through the hawse-hole and then Bill fastened it securely to the cable. On the other end of the rope I made one of the seine buoys fast which I had smuggled up forward as soon as darkness had set in. It was my intention to buoy the anchor when we should cut the cable. With characteristic down-east thrift I was unwilling that the anchor and cable should both go to bottom and be lost; if the anchor was buoyed we might possibly recover it at some future time. The job did not take long. When we went back we reassured the watch that the cable would not chafe through during the night.

I went below into the forecastle for a few minutes. There the usual game of cards was going on, the strangers having been invited to take a hand. With a glance about to reassure me that everything was in readiness

in that quarter I left for the cabin.

There I found Clint entertaining the officer. Two others of our crew were seated on the locker-seat listening to Clint's yarn, a droll account of how he had once saved the S. R. Lane from going ashore in the Bay of

Fundy.

"It was thick-o-fog," Clint was telling the officer, "and my watch forward. We was joggin' back and forth, back and forth like and I had my ears pricked up pretty sharp for a foghorn or bell-buoy. Pretty soon, ye know, I got a whiff of somethin' that smelt familiar. Whiff, whiff, it came through the fog. It kept comin' stronger and stronger. O, me-o-my, I thought, what is that? It smells jest like Cape Nigger but I can't make it out. I was a-sniffing with my old bugle all the time — whiff, whiff. Then all of a sudden it came over me like a shock. 'It's a barnyard!' You see we had got right in under the shore and the wind took some of that barnyard right out to sea for me to smell of. I grabbed the lead and threw it over by

the fore-rigging. One fathom of clear water the Lane was going in then. 'Keep her off! I smell a barnyard!' I yelled again. We jest missed piling up on the beach that time and would have if it hadn't been for my Cape Nigger bugle."

I entered the cabin just as Clint was concluding his story, a classic of his that we had heard so many times we could sometimes imagine that we, too, smelled the

breeze that had saved the schooner.

"How's the weather outside, Pitchfork?" Clint inquired of me.

"Pretty wet and nasty. Glad to be in a good harbor where we can get one night's rest in comfort," I answered.

"Excuse me, mister," said the officer, addressing Clint, "but what did you call your companion?"

"Oh, he's Pitchfork," Clint said, laughing and slapping his leg. "Don't suppose you ever heard his history but it's killin'. You see it was this way. When he was --"

"See here, Clint," I interrupted, pretending to be offended at his familiarity, "you'd better stick to your barnyard instead of raking me over the coals. If I've got to listen to your rubbish I'll go back to the forecastle. Excuse me, officer," I said, turning to him, "perhaps it will be more comfortable if I drew the com-

panionway slide over and shut out the rain."

"Certainly, indeed. Thank you, but don't hurry away," he replied, not a little disturbed for fear his question had wounded my feelings. When I reached deck I pulled the slide over the companionway and fastened the hasp in place with a twenty-penny nail. Bill met me at the house and whispered that the skipper was alongside in the dory. The time for action had come. I went forward and threw a pair of wet oil clothes into the forecastle, as near as I could where the men were seated at the table playing cards. They fell with a swish against somebody and caused some com-

motion, just as was expected by a few.

Shortly George Keene poked his head out of the forecastle looking for "that fresh guy who was throwing wet oil clothes onto folks." He was followed by Ranny MacDonald. Lew and Bill were already on deck, each talking with one of the watch. I slunk away up forward past the watch as if bent on escaping from my pursuers. The Nimbus was pulling easily at the anchor, for there was quite a bit of cable out. The buoy was already afloat at the bow. I cast off the small rope, then slashed the cable in two with the cook's sharp knife as the schooner was settling into the wave. The deed was done, the schooner was adrift.

"How about setting a harbor light in the rigging?" I called out, loud enough to attract the attention of both watches.

That was the signal agreed upon for the watches to be seized. A big towel was thrown about the head of the forward watch and he was pulled backward off his feet. Although he was secured in a moment the scuffle that ensued attracted the attention of the other watch on the quarter deck. Before he could go far he, too, was seized; but before his mouth could be stopped he had called lustily for help a couple of times. His shouts were heard in the cabin and forecastle. The officer in the cabin tried to get the slide open to come on deck. After struggling with it for a time he turned back just in time to see Clint seize the lamp and extinguish it. They were left in the semi-darkness of the cabin.

When the scuffling was heard in the forecastle Lee Parish rose from his seat on the locker just back of one of the seamen. He held an iron belaying pin in his hand. Ranny MacDonald towered above the other fel-

low with a significant statue-of-liberty pose.

"Men," Lee began, talking to our crew, "there is work for you on deck. Get out quick and keep still when you get there. We're going to take the Nimbus out of the harbor. Keep an eye out for what Bill and Pitchfork are doing. You two fellows," he continued, turning to the seamen, "will stay down here. No harm will come to you, only don't try to come on deck. It won't be healthy for you up there. This belaying-pin is warranted cast iron and your heads are not."

Our men rushed from the forecastle and the two deck watches were put below with their companions. Al-

ready the Nimbus was drifting to leeward.

"Quick, men," I said in a low tone as they came out of the forecastle, "get these headsails on the schooner. Some of you go aft and ease off the sheets. Lend a

hand to Bill and George if they need help."

We were drifting past the cutter now, not above fifty yards away. The cry of the watch had aroused comment aboard the *Beetle*. One of the watches aboard the cutter stepped to the rail and called out, "On board the schooner! What's the trouble?"

I answered promptly but with deliberation that befitted the occasion. "Our cable has parted and we are going to take new moorings under your lee. We'll use the chain this time. All right in a moment."

We drifted past the cutter without arousing further suspicion. When the crew began to set the jib and jumbo the watch was again apprehensive that all was not right aboard the *Nimbus*.

"On board the schooner! Why don't you anchor? That is a good anchorage where you are." It sounded like an officer's voice this time; probably the watch had

reported to his superior.

"Aye, aye, sir!" I shouted back. Then to our men in a loud tone, "Get that anchor ready!" To Ranny and Lee I said in an undertone, "Get one of those barrels of fish on the rail ready to go overboard."

"Have you got the anchor ready?" I inquired again

in my best stentorian tones.

"Aye, aye, sir!" came from Ranny loud enough to be heard on board the Beetle.

"Let go the anchor!" I shouted, and the splash of the barrel of mackerel into Halifax harbor was realistic enough to deceive the most expert seaman that dark night.

"All right now, sir!" I shouted back to the officer aboard the cutter, inwardly exulting that a barrel of mackerel could serve so good a purpose as anchoring a

schooner in a gale of wind.

"Set your harbor light! Ho! On board the schooner, set your harbor light!" called the other in a loud, prolonged tone.

"Aye, aye, sir!" I responded from the Nimbus.

But we never carried out his command.

The Nimbus was now headed for the harbor's mouth, all four lower sails drawing. The jib and jumbo had not been hoisted to draw their best but we had not the time to bring the schooner into the wind to set them up better. Time was too precious for that. We sped out into the darkness toward the ocean. Bill Spurling at the wheel was holding the schooner to the first lap of the course which he had been careful to observe when we entered the harbor. He needed little coaching, for he had sailed in and out of the Nova Scotia harbors until he knew them better than most skippers did.

Scarcely five minutes had been consumed in getting the *Nimbus* under way. A slash of the knife, and hoisting the anchor had been done away with; the two big lower sails were drawing in the wind as soon as the schooner's bow was released from the anchor; the other forward sails had been sent up in a jiffy by the eager crew. Two minutes after my last call to the officer we were swallowed up in the blackness of the harbor. For some time we had heard the officer calling from the Beetle, "On board the schooner! Ho! on board the schooner!" until the cry was lost in the wrack of the gale. Through the rain we caught glimpses of lights passing aboard the cutter. Men of the keenest hearing declared they heard the chain being hoisted through the hawse-pipe. I was not so sure of this because sometimes the imagination paints as a reality only what is a mental anticipation. All doubt was removed from my mind a few minutes later when a bright flash appeared from the direction of the cutter and the boom of a cannon shot roared into the night.

"They have discovered our escape," said Bill, "and are giving the alarm. It will be a pretty race in the dark. They'll have to do some pretty fine shooting to hit us and miss their own men aboard at the same time."

Shortly a second flash was seen, followed by the booming of cannon.

CHAPTER XV

OUTLAWS OF THE SEA

OHN DEANE had not accompanied the officer of the cutter ashore in vain. When the two men reached the wharf they separated, the commander to report to the government authorities in the city the capture of an American schooner found trespassing within Canadian waters; the skipper started off in the direction of the residence of the American consul, ostensibly to acquaint him with his version of the illegal seizure of the Nimbus. As a matter of fact he did not go near the consul but awaited a favorable opportunity to return to the schooner unobserved. By the time he reached the Nimbus preparations had been completed for cutting the cable and setting the schooner adrift. He was to have no part in the attempt to take the vessel out of the harbor partly because he was unacquainted with the channel but mostly that he might not be seen to have had any part in the plans or even to be aboard, by the members of the prize crew.

While the booming of cannon was startling the people of the city and especially the commander who had gone ashore, our schooner was making steady headway toward the entrance of the harbor. Both foresail and mainsail were drawing well in the strong breeze. Every warning shot of the cutter caused apprehension aboard the schooner, yet reflection told us that little need be feared from that quarter in so dark a night. We judged that the *Beetle* would not leave the harbor until her commander returned from ashore and events proved

that we were right. This gave us the advantage of a half-hour's start over the other.

"That means that they'll overhaul us in about an

hour from now," said Bill Spurling.

"How do you make that out?" I inquired, for I expected there would be no overhauling, once we got outside the harbor.

"With this breeze we are going along at a good clip," the other replied, "say ten knots. The Beetle can go eighteen knots with steam up. It is likely that they drew their fires after anchoring, so that they could not make more than fifteen the first hour. That would put them right on top of our taffrail before we go beyond Chebucto Point. I wonder how our guest is getting along in the comfort of the cabin?"

We had given no thought to the prize officer and his men since we got under way. Bill's inquiry reminded

us of a neglected duty.

"That's right," answered George Keene. "We must get rid of this supercargo somehow. We can't

take them to America or wherever we are going."

It was a matter for serious deliberation. Taking the men away from Halifax or Canadian waters might raise delicate questions of diplomacy between the two governments concerned. After discussing the matter for a time we decided to jettison our cargo of prize officer and crew of four, put them aboard a dory, and leave them to be picked up by the cutter.

"Better do it before we get outside where it is rougher," suggested Lew Mills. "We don't want any-

thing serious to happen to them."

"Let's go below and see how the officer feels about

being set adrift in a dory," I said to Lew Mills.

I opened the companionway slide and descended to the cabin. No sooner had I set foot upon the last stair when an order came for me to halt and throw up my

hands. I glanced about the cabin. Clint, Ike Merrick and Duncan McCleod were seated in a row on the starboard locker. The officer stood in the middle of the cabin forward of the stove and was holding a revolver in his hand pointed at me. Upon discovering that I carried no weapon in my hands he lowered his. When Lew Mills followed upon my heels he became apprehensive again and kept the weapon jacked up in our direction.

"We shall do you no harm, sir," I said. "As you can understand, the *Nimbus* needs a long tow-rope to get back to Halifax to-night. We fellows never like to lie at anchor in a harbor when we can run outside."

"Do you know you are violating international law in taking us outside the three-mile limit?" the officer said.

"Oh, yes, we have some very keen sea-lawyers aboard. That is our business with you. We will let you and your men leave the schooner before we pass the three-mile limit. But must you go so soon, sir? It is rough to put you off in an open dory in a storm like this. It was at your own invitation that you came aboard the *Nimbus* in the first place; but we will give you a dory and lantern for your convenience."

Lee Parish summoned the four men from the forecastle. A dory was swung overboard. While the oars and lantern were being placed aboard I turned to the

officer again.

"There's one thing that has been bothering me for some time, sir. How did you know Tuesday morning that the *Nimbus* had a school of fish so far to the westward of the rest of the fleet?"

"One of your own schooners gave the information," replied the officer. "The schooner ran alongside of us and the skipper shouted out for us to take a look at the schooner that had made a set to the westward."

"Do you know the name of the schooner?" I asked eagerly.

"No, I do not."

At this point one of the seamen stepped forward and saluted his officer. "Excuse me, sir," he said, "you were asking the name of the schooner that reported you? It was the *Harvest Home*. I remember her for my brother went to the Grand Banks one summer in her."

"Thank you very much, my man," I replied. "Wait a minute till the schooner comes up into the wind. There!" I said as they climbed down into the boat, "You will be all right now. The Beetle will be along within twenty minutes. Keep showing your lantern once in a while and they will pick you up. Good-by, sir, a pleasant voyage to you!"

The painter was cast off. The dory bobbed away in the blackness on top of the waves. As Bill Spurling rolled the wheel up to bring the schooner back to her course he shouted out toward the light of the lantern which came in erratic gleams from our lee, "Tell that commander of yours we're much obliged for the hundred

dollars he gave us to dress these mackerel."

The Nimbus swung back on her course making better headway with the jibs drawing tighter. Bill and George stuck together at the wheel like Siamese twins, Bill actually handling the wheel and George every little while consulting the paper upon which he had the courses and their length marked. It was wonderful to see the two men in agreement for so long a time. The seriousness of their undertaking overcame all differences.

"Things'll be interesting out here in a little while," said Bill to Skipper John, who put in appearance after the dory had been lost in the darkness. "What had we

better do? We can't hope to outsail the cutter. She is sure to be right on our course to Chebucto Point and will overhaul us before we turn westward."

"We'll have to dodge her, that's all," replied John Deane. "When we see her lights we can run off to the eastward until she passes us. It's about time her lights

began to show up."

We kept a sharp lookout astern for the *Beetle*. In the driving rain her lights would not be visible farther than half a mile; yet even so close as that we could easily dodge her in the darkness, we thought. It was Clint who first discovered her lights astern.

"There she is," he said after a time, "See? Right

astern. Both her lights are showing."

"All right," said Bill. "Stand by the sheets and draw them flat when we come into the wind."

The schooner was headed into the storm. Our speed was diminished considerably and there was some fear that we might not be far enough away from the Beetle to escape detection. We kept a sharp lookout on her lights which, after a time, disappeared. George Keene explained this by saying that the Beetle was picking up the men in the dory, a very probable explanation since the two lights appeared from the same quarter after a short interval. The officer in the dory thought we had given him the lantern to make sure he would be discovered by the crew of the cutter. So we had; but our purpose was not so humanitarian as it was selfish. Every minute that the Beetle spent in picking up men in a dory was so much gain for the Nimbus. If we had the job to do over again we would have divided the prize crew and set them adrift two in a boat at in-

"It is impossible for them to see us in this darkness," said Lew Mills. "We are as safe half a mile from them

as we are five miles. As it is they will pass us with the least amount of our sails broadside of them. What will be your course, Bill, when the cutter passes?"

"Thought I'd run her out to sea a few miles, then swing back on the course to Cape Sable when we got

outside Cape Sambo."

"Why not swing right back on her course and follow the Beetle along?" I suggested. "That's the last place

they will be looking to find us."

"It certainly is, my boy," said the skipper, "and that's what we will do. Follow on their heels. If we cannot see them they cannot see us. When they turn at Cape Sambo, as they are sure to do, they will swing out to sea a mile or so more looking for us and we'll go

right on our way rejoicing."

The cutter could be seen more clearly now on our stern. She passed within a quarter of a mile of us, her port light showing dimly through the driving rain but a stream of sparks from her funnel leaving a flare in the sky that was easily traced at the short distance we were from her. The Nimbus circled back in her wake and for a time we went bowling along after them, so long as we could see the sparks. It was the best course we could have taken for we lost the least distance and it put the helmsmen back immediately upon the course where they were sure of their bearings and distances. In another half hour all signs of our pursuer ahead of us had been lost in the storm.

"It's like looking for a lost anchor on Le Have for them to try to pick us up to-night, with all the light they give to warn us of their position," said Lee Parish. "We might as well set our watches and bob a kink while we can."

To make matters safer double watches were set for the night, two forward and two others at the wheel; after the watches had been set the crew turned into their bunks below deck. Skipper John did not leave

the deck during the night.

At midnight we were called from below to take the seine-boat aboard the schooner. When I got on deck I found that others of the crew already had the boat drawn alongside and made secure to the boat-boom. The wind was driving furiously and the schooner was plunging and rolling deep in the seas. The boat was half filled with water and might have been swamped and lost if towed astern longer. Torches, set up in the rigging, were flickering and flaring before the onslaughts of the gale. There was little that I could do except to hold a lantern where its uncertain light might assist the crew at their work.

Ranny MacDonald, the bight-passer, was in the seine-boat. He had just made the boat-tackle fast to the forward part of the boat and hurried astern to make the aft-tackle fast. The seas were running high. At one time the schooner would mount high aloft on a crest while the seine-boat alongside would be far below; again the position of the two craft would be reversed, the thirty-eight-foot seine-boat towering above the rail of the schooner. The men at the tackles needed to watch sharply to take in slack rope at times, and again to let it run freely through the tackle blocks whenever the boat sank quickly into the abyss of a trough.

A Newfoundlander by name of Morris was holding the forward halyard. Once when the schooner went up suddenly and the boat down Morris was jerked off his feet and hurled head first over the rail into the boisterous sea. His disappearance from deck was instantaneous. We were left standing open-mouthed in astonishment at the man's sudden disappearance. John Deane was standing by the main-rigging supervising the work of taking in the boat. When the man shot headforemost over the rail the skipper acted without a moment's hesitation. He sprang from the brake to the schooner's rail, then leaped for the boat somewhere in the darkness below. When we had rushed to the rail with lanterns we saw him at the bow of the seine-boat. He made a lunge for something in the troubled waters between the boat and the schooner. He barely missed the yellow oilcoat of the drowning fisherman. He lunged again, this time holding to the rail of the boat with left hand and foot, his body submerged in the wave. He seized the man's coat and pulled the fellow to the surface; then, not being in a position to pull him aboard the boat, he let go his hold on the boat, grasped Morris in both his strong arms and turned on his back in the water while he literally boosted the unfortunate man out of the seas into the seine-boat. And then Ranny Mac-Donald was at hand to help the skipper aboard.

Morris was taken to his berth in the forecastle more dead than alive. It was like resurrecting one from the dead to restore him to the schooner's deck. Only the quick action and almost superhuman strength of our leader could have accomplished the deed so quickly, at a

time when moments meant life or death.

The gale increased in fury through the hours of the night. When the crew went below at one o'clock in the morning, after the seine-boat had been made secure against the inner port rail, John Deane was at the wheel guiding his schooner through the gale and guarding his crew against all harm from wind or wave. As the men, dripping wet, disappeared one by one into cabin or forecastle they gave silent thanks that they served under a man who risked his own life to save one of his crew. With the dawn of another day the storm was lashing the seas with unabated fury. It drove the Nimbus forward through white, heaving masses on which appeared neither ships' sails nor steamers' funnels. The schooner,

after passing Cape Sable and Seal Island in a wide circle, was headed for Mt. Desert Rock.

Friday forenoon, four days after her seizure by the Beetle, the Nimbus entered the Latona river and was made fast to the wharf. Far down the stream the identity of the schooner was made out by men ashore and the word passed upstream. A small boy, upon hearing the news, ran up the bank toward the village shouting at the top of his voice, "The Nimbus is in! The Nimbus is in!" If ever Comberton folks were surprised it was at the return of the schooner and her crew in late May. Many of the crew aboard the schooner, too, were surprised to return from the Cape Shore trip so soon, or to return in the Nimbus at all.

CHAPTER XVI

A BOLD VENTURE

OHN DEANE had left the Latona river an honest fisherman; he entered his home port proclaimed by a foreign government an outlaw of the sea and that, too, done at the instigation of one of his fellow townsmen. We had not been in Comberton twelve hours before word reached the community over the wires that a reward of five thousand dollars had been offered for the capture of the schooner Nimbus, Captain John Deane, by the government whose laws, it was claimed, he had violated and whose dignity he had affronted. His friends were quick to assure him of their faith in his cause, yet they knew full well that no amount of assurance in Comberton would diminish the dangers to which

his schooner would be exposed at sea.

What should he do next? He had sailed to Comberton after the escape from Halifax to dispose of his cargo of mackerel and to get his bearings. With a price set upon his head, for that is what the reward amounted to, he would be greatly handicapped during the remainder of the fishing season. He had the schooner but her ship's papers were held by the commander of the revenue cutter. Possibly he might fish in American waters unimpeded by his own government; but the waters of the maritime provinces were closed There always would be vigilant cutters waiting and watching to seize his schooner should he venture into the forbidden regions. In fact, he was not sure that any person might not be commissioned to seize his

schooner and cargo anywhere upon the ocean. To remain in New England waters while the migrating fish were rushing toward the Gulf of St. Lawrence would be to throw away the golden opportunity of the season for securing a full cargo of mackerel. Discretion warned him to play a careful game, his ambition whispered of great catches of mackerel still to be had on the Cape Shore. The bold spirit of youth decided in favor of what seemed a rash venture and what proved to be filled with exciting moments.

For one day only the *Nimbus* remained moored at the wharf. On the day after arrival the storm had cleared, moorings were cast off, a favoring breeze freshened from the northwest, and the good schooner bowled along into the deeper seas with all sails drawing. Outside the bay

she was headed toward the Rock; beyond that, the course shaved by Cape Sable and when the schooner had rounded the west front of Nova Scotia her daring skipper held her to a course that would take her back to the very regions from which she had so recently fled.

This was the course that everybody said he should not take. And since John Deane knew that the Nova Scotia coast was the last region where friends or enemies

would expect him to go he decided to venture into the forbidden waters.

At midnight on the second night at sea the Nimbus was off Halifax again. Bill Spurling was summoned to the wheel to guide the miscreant schooner back to the scene of her late imprisonment. We entered the harbor under the jealous light of a late moon; we located the moorings of the port anchor; and we sailed out of harbor again as silently as a wraith of mist, unknown and unchallenged by the sleeping port. The lost anchor rested in place on the rail, destined to serve the schooner through many storms until it should lie at last and forever on the bottom of a hostile sea. As the Nimbus

glided noiselessly back into the Atlantic the face of the kindly moon, now low in the west, was turned away from John Deane's craft as if she approved the rape of the anchor but feared to witness openly the deed lest she be called to testify against him whose cause she had assisted.

Thereafter followed hard days, days of work and nights of toil, a week of remorseless driving of schooner and crew such as only a strong man could accomplish. John Deane proved himself a "driver" among the seiners, working day and night alike to succeed, bidding defiance to wind and storm, placing no hardships upon his men that he was not willing to share with them, and driving his schooner wherever he would so long as mackerel could be secured. He gave little thought to danger that his schooner might encounter, no thought to the work he was undertaking; as the hunter drives from his mind every impression of field or forest except the game he pursues so the skipper of the Nimbus dismissed from his thought everything except his overwhelming desire to catch mackerel.

We fell in with the seining fleet off old Louisburg without once having seen a hostile cutter along the entire coast. From Frank Payson's men who had been ashore at Louisburg we learned that the Nimbus and her commander were doubly outlawed since it was reported to the men that the reward of five thousand dollars for the capture of the Nimbus had been increased "by a public spirited personage whose name was

withheld" to ten thousand dollars.

"That's putting a big value on Captain Ober's schooner," commented Skipper John when he was informed of the news. "They say that money talks—we'll see what sort of conversation the ten thousand dollars will stir up this summer." Apparently he dismissed the matter from his mind; yet as the weeks ad-

vanced he became aware that the old adage had not lost

its vigor.

On the day that the schooner overtook the fleet our real work began. We were coasting along the Cape Breton shore with fair weather and light winds. Suddenly the lookout at the crosstrees shouted "School Ho!" Everybody jumped at the call. When I reached deck the crew were frantically endeavoring to shove their legs into limp oilpants and at the same time craning their necks to catch a glimpse of the schooling mackerel. We made a quick dash for the school, set the seine, and pursed up in short order. All in vain, for we caught only a "water haul." Scarcely had we begun to take the seine off the seine-boat to make it ready for another set when a sharp "School Ho!" again sounded from aloft.

"Haul up the other boat," the skipper called. He was in the rigging watching for mackerel. "Let go the jibsheet! Keep her to! Pull in the mainsheet! In

the boat!"

The orders came thick and fast. Lew Mills appeared from the forecastle. We abandoned everything, schooner and all, to his care, and tumbled over the rail into the seine-boat. Success this time, for the seine hung deep and heavy in the water when the schooner came to pick us up. Down came jib and jumbo on the run, the forepeak was drawn to port and dropped. After that we clung to the toppinglift halyards while we bailed our catch of fish aboard the schooner. It was a long time, in which our arms ached and passed beyond the aching point, and our poor hands were given such a drubbing and squeezing as they never had before. No end to the stream of mackerel being dumped on deck, while the weary arms must go up heavy with their own weight but pull downward without lagging strength.

No mercy from Lew Mills who guided the big dipnet

down into the masses of striped fish alongside the schooner. "Go ahead — come up! Go ahead — come up!" he called without ceasing through the hours. For a long time we gripped the biting, slippery halyard, swaying to the right and the left in long swinging heaves on the rope while the numb, mangled fingers were reduced to fleshy pulp. "Go ahead — come up!" all through the hours until four in the afternoon. Decks were filled from rail to rail, from forecastle to the mainhouse. No room was left to move about, none to set up the gib-keelers for dressing the catch, no way to get forward to the forecastle except to balance along the slippery rail.

That was a memorable night. The schooner lay to under mainsail and foresail. Torches in the rigging shed light upon the scene and gave weird pictures of the men at their work. Midnight brought hot coffee and "mug-ups" from the cook's quarters which no man refused. Splitting and gibbing and plowing and washing a deckload of fish, no rest or sleep until the work was done, no night for the tired crew of the Nimbus. At four-thirty the following morning when the peaceful glow of another work day was spreading over sky and sea alike, we finished the task before us and tumbled into our berths to sleep and rest.

It was less than four hours before George Keene touched me lightly on the shoulder. "Your watch," he announced briefly. I took my hands along with me as I went to deck, poor papier-maché things that they were, all doubled up and closed tight as a dead miser's fist. They no longer seemed a part of me, just useless bunches of flesh fastened inconveniently to my wrists. And with my thumbs I pried each stiff finger painfully out of the palms until my hands were half open.

At the cross-trees I found John Deane searching the seas everywhere for mackerel — vigilant, tireless, sleep-

less worker, going to his station on the cross-trees at dawn when the rest of us went to our bunks. That is the way of the mackerel "driver." He drives himself but is considerate of his crew; he goes aloft to remain hours at a time; he spends less time in his berth than any other man aboard ship; even with capable men at the crosstrees he shares with them the vigilance of discovering the first signs of schooling mackerel.

"Look down there, David," he said to me, almost before I had got my back comfortably settled against the masthead. He pointed to a dark streak upon the water just ahead of the schooner. "See? There's a raft of fish. You'd better go down." Then to the man at the wheel he called out, "Keep her to a little!

Steady! Call the men; pull up the boat!"

*Two hours later fifty-seven wash barrels of fish were on deck to be added to the hundred and sixty-seven of the day before. Work ahead for mangled hands to do, and work enough already on deck in heading and stowing away the other catch to keep us busy through the day and until nine in the evening.

"Keep a sharp lookout for schools of mackerel," was the warning given by the skipper to the watch when he retired for the night. Even night placed no

check to his zeal and vigilance.

Some villain or other did keep a sharp lookout. We were routed out at eleven and ordered into the seine-boat. A shadowy gleam of schooling mackerel, visible by the phosphorescent streak made by the swimming fish, had caught the eye of the vigilant watch. How mackerel fishermen detest night "owling"! It rarely proves successful, it breaks into the night's rest and is always disagreeable. The chill of the night gets into the fishermen's systems and makes them very unsocial beings. After being towed astern the schooner for a couple of hours the "owling" was given up and we were al-

lowed to retire to our warm comforters and blankets.

Fortunately for the crew a friendly fog hung over the waters until eight o'clock the next morning. We had passed Scatari Island and were sailing up the east coast of Cape Brecon. As soon as the fog began to lift schools of mackerel were seen all about the schooner. There was work for every schooner in the fleet, with men laboring for dear life to capture the fish while they schooled and the fog permitted.

Skipper John was at his best. He made as many sets of the seine as any one could and more than any of the rest did, four sets of the big seine before the fog settled upon the waters again and hid the fish from view. Even when the fog rolled in from the sea upon us we were in the seine-boat a mile or more from the schooner; but, fog or no fog, we got our fourth catch of mackerel safely within the seine. It proved the biggest catch of the day. Lucky? So some said. But due more likely to the driving skipper and his tireless crew.

Busy times still aboard the bloody decks of the Nimbus and it lacked two hours of midnight before our day's work was done. We were routed out at five o'clock, seven hours later, to chase a shadowy school of fish in vain. Then followed for a couple of days strong winds, and heavy seas to break up our winning streak of luck. We ran up the coast to the shelter of Aspey Bay.

The fleet had now reached the limit of the Cape Shore trip beyond which the schooners do not venture in their pursuit of the spring school of mackerel. The crew of the Nimbus were jubilant as we sought our berths at night. We had a right to be. No other crew in the fleet had worked so hard as we or been rewarded so bounteously for their toil. To John Deane belonged in a large measure the credit for the fine catch

of mackerel on the wharf at Comberton and in the hold of the *Nimbus*. Tired though we were, every man aboard ship was hoping for another clear day and an opportunity to pit his skill and brawn against the fur-

tive wiles of the disappearing schools.

As events proved, there was plenty of need of brain and brawn the following day. Toward sunset, with a subsidence of the storm outside, the *Nimbus* was got under way and passed outside to be ready for any emergency, whether schooling fish or hostile cutters. Other seiners joined the little fleet at Aspey Bay and among the number, although offshore from us, Clint discovered the familiar rigging of the *Harvest Home*. But the commander of the *Harvest Home* did not discover our presence until the following morning.

CHAPTER XVII

A CONTEST OF VIKINGS

HURSDAY, the eighth of June, was a magnificent day on the Cape Breton shore. The fog which had hung over us for several days lifted early off the quiet waters of Aspey Bay and disclosed the American fishing fleet making ready for the activities of another day. Along the narrow strip of shore columns of smoke from the homes of fishermen curled upward toward the lofty hills that rise above the bay. The headlands of Cape North were aglow with the eastern light. On the hills the somber green of highland spruce was relieved by occasional clumps of budding poplar and birch. Along the lower slopes where the grade was gentler, little patches of green field struggled to climb the sides of the mountain. The hand of winter still rested in the uppermost valleys and, as if reluctant to leave the country, had deployed narrow drifts of snow down the deeper recesses like a rear-guard protecting a necessary retreat.

Long before the sun arose we were astir aboard the Nimbus. Precious little time there had been that night for rest and sleep. The slender forecastle stack was pouring forth volumes of smoke before my watch ended at two o'clock; by four, Lew Mills had fed both gangs of men and was standing near the foremast shrouds shaking his red tablecloth defiantly in the face of the

awakening fleet.

Every man of the crew was on his mettle with the belief that the last day for a "killing" had come.

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All was put in readiness for the last effort. The seine-boat was alongside, the crew had given one another a "spell" at pumping it dry; a jug of fresh water had been stowed away in the stern locker; the seine-heaver and bight-passer tiered up the top layers of the seine with unusual care, while the dory-mates, Clint and George, sputtered away at each other in good-humored banter as they lowered the dory overboard and made it fast with shortened painter near the starboard quarter.

Skipper John was at the cross-trees. Whether or not he had had any breakfast was a doubtful question. He was keenly alert; that much we could see as we watched him from the deck. He swayed back and forth on the cross-trees as he scanned every rod of sea within

his view.

As the light fog lifted off the bay the fleet began to get under way. We could hear the clank of chains passing through the hawse-pipe, the creaking of long unused tackle-blocks, and the "all-pull-together" of half-awake fishermen. The sea was calm. So light was

the wind that the sails went up limp and lifeless.

John Miles and Captain Beers were the only other skippers who had remained outside the harbor during the night. The wisdom of our action was now apparent. In all likelihood the mackerel would school off the entrance to Aspey Bay and not far from the place where our schooners were rising and falling in the old swell. The wind would be useless in getting the schooners to the schools of fish; if any mackerel were taken it would be by means of the "ash breeze"—the long, strong pull of the oar in the seine-boats. The three schooners lying offshore had a two-mile advantage over the others and would have first chance at the best schools of mackerel.

Slowly we drifted offshore. When the fog disappeared entirely the sun poured upon us with a steadi-

ness that foretold a hot day at the oars. While we were lounging about the deck and watching the inshore fishermen towing their schooners out of the bay we heard the skipper talking to the watch who was aloft with him. He was pointing with his arm toward the eastward.

"Skipper sees a school," some one ventured.

At this we jumped upon the house or into the lower rigging, whichever was handier, as eager to see a school of mackerel as if it was our first experience. Shortly we made out several schools, all of them a long way from the schooner. Aboard the other schooners men climbed into the rigging, following our lead and not to be outdone in the attempt to get the first school of fish. Then on the surface about a mile away a school larger and blacker than the others, slowly made its appearance.

"What a raft of fish!" exclaimed our Cape Negro representative, "Enough to load us down to the scuppers."

Further remarks were cut short by the skipper's

curt order, "Get into the boat."

We scrambled back to deck, rushed to port with oil clothes under our arms and sprang to our places in the boat. The watch aloft threw his leg about the jib-halyard and came to deck in a streak, burning his pants and boot through by the scorching rope. All eyes turned to the skipper. He had slipped down to the topmast ratline where he remained studying the direction of the moving body of mackerel. Then he turned to look over other promising schools, took a look at John Miles, and finally glanced at the *Harvest Home*. What he saw stirred him to instant action. He swung into the standing rigging, slid to the deck on the instant and shouted "Push off" before his feet fairly struck the deck of the schooner.

The bow of the seine-boat swung off, the oars fell into

place and we were ready to pull ahead when the skipper made a flying leap from the rail as the stern of the boat swung in toward the vessel. The seine-heaver reached out a friendly hand and saved him from falling back into the sea.

"Go ahead on your oars," he called, scrambling to his feet.

The oars caught the water together and we were off. "There goes 'Cate Beers," cried John Cameron from his vantage point on top of the seine. When our boat shot out from under the Nimbus we were going at full speed. The seine-boat of the Harvest Home was already a hundred yards from her schooner, headed for the same school of fish. The crew of the other boat had a start of us by a full minute. Captain Beers was at the steering oar. His crew were swaying back and forth with clockwise precision as they bent to the long swinging stroke of the mackerel seiner. With every pull of the oar their boat leaped her bows out of the water. It was this sight that had stirred John Deane to quick action. Over our left shoulder we caught a glimpse of 'Cate Beers and his men leading us in the race which spurred every man to his best. If an added stimulus was needed it came from Lew Mills who had taken charge of the Nimbus.

"Are you fellows going to let 'Cate Beers get that school of fish?" he called out to us.

He ran back nimbly to the wheel, whirled it about deftly with a turn of his hand, then glanced aloft at the sails. We saw him leap upon the house, raise his clenched fist and bring it down into his other palm with a resounding whack. It was a plea for a mighty effort and we could not disappoint him.

Big Lee Parish at the stroke oar answered the appeal of the master of the forecastle. No man of the crew was stronger or tougher than he. His muscles and

sinews had been hardened in the Icelandic fisheries. The twelve-foot oar was a plaything in his hands. How it bent beneath his strength as he whipped his hands to his breast at the end of each stroke! How quickly and surely the other men followed his example and caught the stroke of the leader! Backward and forward we swung together, every stroke our strongest. Nothing was held in reserve. The occasion called forth our supreme effort in a straight-away pull such as only men trained in rough seas can give.

Shortly the two boats neared each other as they sped toward the goal of schooling mackerel. From out the corners of our eyes we saw that the other crew were pulling as they had not done since the *Harvest Home* was launched. That was a sight to see — a dozen men in one boat putting their brawn and muscle against a like number of men in another! No college contest here, with professional coaches and fair ladies and screaming thousands adding enthusiasm to a race of colors. These are the Vikings of the Western World, sea-bred and strong, struggling against men of their own class, fighting the battle for their daily bread and looking only for a fair chance with their rivals.

Not a word from the men in command. They knew their crews, knew that seasoned fishermen rarely need urging to call forth their utmost efforts. They knew each other, too, did these mariners. Skipper John had not taken his eyes from the schooling fish from the moment he took the steering oar in his hand. Straight as a bullet sped his boat toward its goal. John Deane realized that the Gloucester fleet behind him was taking his measure now that he was pitted against the very man under whom he had served, involuntarily and with hardship, in his first deep-sea fishing.

Captain Beers had no fear for the skipper, although he had wholesome respect for his physical prowess. He, too, watched the school of mackerel. Now and then he glanced at Skipper John to measure the distance between the boats, to calculate his own advantage, and possibly to decipher Skipper John's intentions. But John Deane did not indicate by look or sign that he was aware 'Cate Beers and his struggling crew were afloat that fine morning.

Another glance at the rival boat showed me that we were less than two hundred feet apart and tearing toward each other as the boats converged upon a common goal with a recklessness that foreboded disaster for both. Beers had the advantage of distance by a full boat-length but he would need to turn from his straight course slightly to be in position to make the set. We held the advantage of position, since the school of

mackerel was moving directly away from us.

How would the race end? Look out, Skipper John, you'll run their boat down! Beers has the lead; why don't you change your course and give him the school? These thoughts flashed through my mind. But there was never a budging of his steering oar, never a look in the direction of the rival boat, never a swerve to the right or left from the goal ahead. The crew caught the skipper's spirit. We knew that he could not be beaten and we bent with renewed zeal to the oars. Sweat stood out on our faces, our breath came deep and heavy. The boat shot straight on, quick in its response to our efforts.

Then the unexpected happened. Lee Parish put all his might and main into his work. The tough ash oar was no longer a match for his giant strength. It snapped in two like a pipestem.

"Hell's luck to you," Lee shouted after the broken blade as he rammed it quickly beneath the wave. "Give me your oar, boy," he said, turning to me as I was re-

covering the stroke.

On the instant I unshipped my oar, made a pass for his rowlock and by good luck shipped it into place at the first trial. Lee seized hold of the oar and swung back on it without missing a stroke. I turned about and

pushed on the oar of the man who sat behind me.

When I turned on the thwart the boat of 'Cate Beers was sweeping across our bow. We were so close that an accident seemed unavoidable. John Deane held his boat unflinchingly to its course. But Beers was equal to the occasion. He suddenly raised his arms on high, swept his great steering oar beneath the bow of our boat and called sharply for his men to ease their starboard oars. His boat turned quickly, the stern swung out of our reach and we missed crashing into his boat by an oar's length as we shot past.

Now we were on the inside and in a position to make the set. Scarcely a boat-length separated us when Skipper John cried out in a voice that every man in the other crew well understood, "Let go your twine!"

And our big seine-heaver did let it go. With a mighty sweep of his arms he flung the bight of twine into the sea, then seized bight after bight from John Cameron's hands and cast them from him into the water with such glee as our forefathers cast boxes of tea into Boston harbor. We had won the race from 'Cate Beers—and the school was ours to get!

When our seine struck the water the contest was closed to the other boat. Captain Beers said never a word. He had been beaten in a fair race; but it cut him to the quick to be outdone by John Deane. He needed to say little, for his crew left nothing unsaid that befitted the occasion. In the very short time that we remained within earshot of the other crew we learned a great deal about ourselves which we would have resented on any other occasion. We were too much engrossed in our work to pay heed to their jeers.

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Our boat shot straight ahead fifty yards before it began to circle about the fish. The mackerel were still at the surface schooling finely. The skipper leaned far to port in frantic endeavors to keep the seine-boat to the circle he should follow about the school. We were too much for him that morning and he had to call upon us to ease the starboard oars. Around we went, faster and faster. Never before had the crew shot the seine-boat around a school of fish as on that day. Two hundred fathoms of twine were flung out, the circle was completed and still the fish showed up within the circle of corks. Could we get them before they dived beneath the seine?

"Ship oars," called the skipper.

In they came with a crash and rattle as they were

flung into the port davits.

"Grab that buoy, Ike. That's it, pull it in. Get that tackle in place. Quick now! Pass me that purseline. Shove the other bight through the block. All ready, go ahead on your line! The fish are there and we'll have them in a minute or so."

How the skipper got down amidst us so quickly nobody knew, nobody had time to inquire. He was everywhere directing the work. It was his business to have no false moves, to see that everything moved with precision. No doubt about his being a master mariner

this day.

How we pulled on the purse-line! Sweat streamed from every pore, muscles ached, eyes were bleary with the effort we made. Nothing mattered until the work was done. Hand over hand we rushed the rope in until the slack was taken up; then it came harder and we bent our backs to pull all together. Forward and back swayed the gangs, pull apart and come together, back and forth time and again. Would it never end, and our backs a-breaking with the pull we had had at

the oars and doubly breaking as we strained at the purse-line. Harder and heavier grew the work, shorter and sharper the pulls. Not a word was spoken, no breath to lose here.

Was there no end to that purse-line? Were the mackerel still in the seine? Or was this work all for naught? What a raft of fish there must be to make the purse-line pull so hard! It seemed an eternity of pulling, when suddenly the welcome grating of the purse-rings was heard against the rail. One long, last pull and the rings rattled over the rail into the boat. We sank back upon the thwarts completely pumped out — but happy. We had won the race, the fish were there!

CHAPTER XVIII

DEFYING THE LION

T was a lively scene in Aspey Bay that morning. Shortly after we made our set twine was dried in, a light breeze of wind came off the headlands which gave the schooners a chance to move freely about the fishing grounds. The business of mackerel seining could be seen in all its phases. fish were schooling over a small area, since their lines were converging as the great mass of fish neared Cape North in their migration into the North Bay. ers were tacking and jibing about to avoid running down the seine-boat in their path or to prevent colliding with other schooners, and always to keep from running into another man's school of fish. There were schooners with "jib-hauls," whose crews were heaving at the halvards to retrieve their newly gotten treasures from the seas; other vessels were coming alongside their seine-boats to make fast to the seine, with its catch bulging the net in generous measure beneath the surface; still others were sailing back and forth under the ambidextrous hands of the cook - hands that were equally adept in molding bread, in splitting mackerel and in sailing the schooner while the crew were in the seine-boat.

We were leisurely drying in the twine when Lew Mills came up with the Nimbus. He made no reference to the great victory that we had just won, doubly satisfying to us because the catch completed our cargo and because we had defeated 'Cate Beers. The cook called to us sharply, "You'd better get those fish aboard the schooner pretty quick. You are not too far from the three-mile limit. Looks as if a revenue cutter was coming, there's a streak of smoke on the horizon."

The skipper sprang into the dory and pulled to the Nimbus. He mounted the rigging where, with the aid of glasses, he had a better view of the horizon. He returned to deck almost immediately and turned the bow of the schooner toward the seine-boat. "Drop everything else and bail in the mackerel. There's a cutter coming this way. She may make trouble for us. We'd better be up and away before she arrives. Now hustle, men, if you never did before."

We had already made a record in the manner that our full cargo of mackerel had been taken. With the added stimulus of a chance to get away to Gloucester before the cutter should arrive, to be the first of the fleet to leave the Cape Shore with a loaded schooner, we forgot the labors of the past week and even the exertions of the morning. Never did we make the big dipnet jump out of the water with its load of struggling mackerel as on that day. Up arms and down again, this time faster than we believed possible. Sore hands were of the past, stiff arms had been left behind at Scatari, tired backs ached no more. We wanted to save our school and get away from trouble. I thought of John Deane's woodpile philosophy, "When you do one thing and think about another it doesn't seem like work." Our thoughts were elsewhere than on sore fingers and tired muscles. What would be the good to have escaped from Halifax if we were seized again with a full cargo? So we pulled and swayed on the topping-lifts as if they were playthings. The approaching cutter was still four miles away when the last mackerel was bailed on deck.

"Better get away from here, hadn't we?" Lew Mills

suggested to the skipper.

"Why should we hurry?" he inquired, entirely at ease. We did not know what plans he had in mind. We had confidence in his judgment yet we had to admit to a little uneasiness in mind as the cutter sailed around through the fleet of schooners.

"We don't need any more mackerel," Lew replied. "We have got as many as we can handle now. Why not set the topsails and get away to Gloucester? The breeze is getting fresher all the time. Besides, I be-

lieve the Beetle is looking for trouble."

"That's just why we should be in no hurry to leave the fleet. When there's trouble we want to be among friends, not alone. Look at that! There's where our trouble begins." John Deane pointed to the *Harvest Home*, whose dory was just leaving the schooner's side headed for the cutter.

"Pass me the glasses." He took the binoculars from George Keene's hands. "Just as I thought. 'Cate Beers is going aboard to inform the cutter's officers that the *Nimbus* is in the fleet.

"It's the old man himself going aboard the Beetle. The old hypocrite! Selling his own townsmen just to please his boss, Seth Hinds. That's why I'm in no hurry to leave the fleet. The officer may hesitate to seize us while we are with the rest of the fleet. We'll drop a word for some of the other skippers to stick by us for a while."

Acting on the idea the *Nimbus* was put about and circled among the friendly schooners. Captain Deane explained to the commanders that he expected trouble from the *Beetle* and wanted his fellow skippers to help him out, if an opportunity afforded.

"Stand in between us and the cutter if they attempt to board us," he called to John Miles, as the two schooners were passing. "You'll do me a favor to delay the game when it is on as much as possible, but take care not to get into trouble yourself."

The cutter circled among the schooners as if she was paying a friendly visit. But when she came within easy distance of the *Nimbus* a boat was lowered from her side.

"Here, Bill, take the wheel. Keep the Nimbus away from the Beetle as much as you can; work her to the southward, too, without getting out of the fleet too much. Have the topsail halyards loosed and the staysail ready to set. Use your sense now, if you ever did. You men had better let me do the talking."

The cutter's boat shot across the water to the Nimbus with two middies seated at the oars. In the stern of the boat sat Captain Quigley, a revenue officer who had displaced the former commander of the Beetle. As the boat came alongside the forward rower shipped his oars and stood ready to throw the painter. John Deane stood aft of the main rigging and caught the painter as it was thrown over the rail. We noticed that he stooped and made the end fast to the purseweight that happened to be under the rail, as there was no cleat at hand.

"Captain Deane?" inquired the officer stiffly, partly rising from the seat as if he expected the boat to be pulled closer to the schooner's side.

"Sir!" responded John Deane, respectfully saluting the officer. He made no effort to draw the boat closer.

"I wish to board your schooner."

"For what purpose?" inquired the skipper steadily.
"As an officer of the Canadian government in the

"As an officer of the Canadian government in the performance of my duty," replied the officer, with a show of authority.

"No Canadian officer has a duty to perform aboard

my schooner when upon the high seas," answered John Deane in a manner that told the nearby skippers that he knew his rights and intended to maintain them.

"Ask him how he came out with seizing the Marion Grimes off Shelburne harbor, John," shouted a skipper

from a passing schooner.

"It is my duty to seize your schooner and cargo for trespassing in Canadian waters," replied the officer, affecting not to hear the American skipper's question.

"Is a schooner subject to detention and seizure twice for the same offense?" persisted John Deane. Before the officer could make answer Skipper John asked again, "How can you seize the Nimbus now? She has already been seized for the alleged Liverpool offense but not condemned. What are your grounds for fresh seizure?"

"Then I'll seize you for sailing the high seas without her papers, a trespass against the laws of nations," quickly declared the other, sure that he had caught the wily Yankee this time for the papers of the Nimbus

were safely aboard the Beetle.

"That is a matter that concerns my government only. You have no more rights in the case than the king of Iceland," replied John Deane, half contemptuously because of his growing conviction that the officer intended to seize his schooner on any pretext, or without pretext, if necessary.

"There are other reasons why you are subject to arrest," answered the irate officer. "Kindly let me

aboard your schooner!"

"When you catch the Nimbus in a Canadian harbor I'll allow you to come aboard. But under no other circumstances have you a right to set your foot on her deck, or to impede her free passage upon the high seas, or to molest her in any other way," John Deane an-

swered, leaning over the rail and laying down the law in imitation of the officer's manner.

While the interview was going on affairs were shaping themselves among the fleet quite to our satisfaction. Thanks to Bill Spurling's handling of the wheel and the coöperation of the American seiners the Nimbus was fully a quarter mile from the Beetle, while half a dozen schooners sailing back and forth near us were interposing a screen between the two craft. Much of the time the officers aboard the cutter could not see, much less understand, what was taking place with their commander except that he was being towed alongside the schooner. John Deane, considering that the time for action had come, addressed the officer again.

"As I size up the situation, sir, you have decided to seize the *Nimbus* on whatever pretext may be found," he said.

"That is exactly the case. I mean to carry out my purpose, too. I have been insulted as no British officer should be. Any further refusal to give up your schooner will result more seriously for you," the officer replied.

"We've already suffered hardship from the Beetle and have no taste for more," replied the skipper with a show of feeling.

"You'll get something harder unless you comply with my request at once," the other retorted, mistaking Skipper John's tone as a sign of weakening.

"Harder? What do you mean?"

"Solid shot, that's what I mean. If I can't take you peaceably I'll take you by force," Quigley shouted from the boat.

"Very well, sir, you are at liberty to begin," answered the commander of the Nimbus. Without further words he raised the purse-weight, to which the

boat's painter was made fast, to the rail and lowered it overboard. The heavy lead sank quickly, pulling the bow of the boat down into the water by its weight. Before the officer in the boat was aware what was happening John Deane had anchored him and his craft by the heavy purse-weight as solidly as if a steel rod bound them to the ocean's bottom. He gave orders for his men to go ahead on their oars. The boat made no headway. One of the sailors stepped to the bow of the boat and tried to raise the weight out of the water; it would have been a hard task even for two men had there been room in the boat's bow for them to stand.

Quigley was furious. He was in an exasperating position. The Nimbus was sailing away from him, he was anchored helpless to the Atlantic ocean and powerless to prevent the escape of the schooner. He could neither go ahead nor free his boat from its anchorage. He had been cleverly outwitted, insulted and humiliated in the presence of his sailors and the American seining fleet. It was a bold act for John Deane to attempt his escape by anchoring the commander of the Beetle by the schooner's purse-weight.

When the irate officer saw that his man could not raise the weight he called out, "Cut the dam'd thing

and let us get away from here!"

The man whipped a knife from his belt and, leaning over the bow of the boat, attempted to cut the weight free. Unfortunately for them there was a short chain that fastened the painter to the boat's bow which was drawn too far under water to allow him to slash the rope. After striking frantically under water for several minutes he rose from his work even redder in the face than his commander.

No sooner had John Deane got rid of his obnoxious visitor by dropping the purse-weight over the rail of the schooner than he gave orders for all sails to be set. The crew sprang eagerly to the halyards. In a twinkling the outer jibs, the topsails and the staysail were in place and drawing full in the breeze that came from Cape North. The skipper was at the wheel when we passed John Miles.

"Run down to the fellow and take him aboard, John. Keep him aboard as long as you can without running any risk yourself. Delay him all you can. See you in Gloucester," called our skipper to the other com-

mander.

With a wave of his hand John Miles signified that he would do all in his power to help the young skipper whom he had helped train in the mackerel fishery. His schooner tacked about and bore off towards the help-less commander of the *Beetle*. Other schooners came up and helped to conceal the predicament of the officer from those aboard the cutter.

To the astonishment of everybody John Deane headed his schooner straight for the cutter. When he was in hailing distance he turned the wheel a few spokes to head the schooner toward the south. Then he shouted to the officers at the rail of the cutter, "The Beetle is ordered to proceed south to Scatari, keeping half a mile ahead of the Nimbus. Captain Quigley will follow shortly in the Harvest Home."

The command was given in a tone that carried conviction to the listening officers. Immediately he gave orders to let out the sheets after issuing his commission to the officers aboard the *Beetle*. He acted in a businesslike fashion, as if the matter was already settled. The officer at the rail turned to the house, pulled a signal to the engineroom, and the *Beetle*, obedient to Skipper John's command, pushed ahead of the *Nimbus* and led her away from the American fleet at Aspey Bay. Our sails were set and drawing full, the *Nimbus* was headed toward Scatari and we were homeward

bound again, this time with mackerel enough aboard to fill over four hundred barrels, just the kind of ballast that the schooner needed to give her the best trim for sailing. We felt like shouting aloud but dared not speak a word for fear our joy would be interpreted by the crew of the *Beetle*. But it seemed too good to be

true, or to last for long.

The American fleet was scarcely a mile in our wake before we were dressing down the catch of the morning. Again the decks of the Nimbus were red with blood. Once more a flock of screeching gannets and gulls followed in our wake, greedily swooping into the sea whenever the contents of a gib-keeler were dumped over the rail. Back we sailed over the bloody trail that had marked the course of the schooner the previous week, speeding toward market with two streams of red blood dripping from the scuppers and flanking the wake of John Deane's schooner. How happy we were as we sailed along that day! What a joy to work and to conquer! Bright skies above us, a sea that could not hold back the sparkling sunlight upon its waters, a favoring breeze that kept the Nimbus on an even keel as we dressed the fish and hastened on our way.

All day long until six at night we stood at the gib-keelers knee-deep in mackerel, our fronts blood-red with gore, while we heartlessly tore the vitals from the fish and threw the disemboweled victims into the gaping barrels. All day we sailed southward keeping in the wake of the *Beetle*, while behind us, a white speck on the horizon, was a schooner which we knew was the *Harvest Home*, vainly struggling to sail up the rounded orb of ocean that separated us from the irate commander of

the Beetle.

CHAPTER XIX

SEINE-BOAT OR SCHOONER?

HEN darkness set in we were in the vicinity of Flint Island, about a dozen miles from Scatari. All the afternoon we had been wondering how we would get out of the difficulty in which we were placed after requesting the Beetle to proceed down the coast half a mile ahead of us. breeze of the afternoon gradually died down from an eight-knot breeze to a light one in which we made no more than four miles an hour. This allowed the Harvest Home to gain on us since she could sail faster in a light breeze than the Nimbus. It would not be many hours before we would be overhauled and this time it meant capture of some kind or other. After the mackerel had been dressed and the decks cleared again, as much as was possible with having a hundred odd barrels of the fish stowed against the rail, the skipper had us haul the seine-boat alongside and take out everything from her, even to row-locks.

During the afternoon Skipper John and Lew Mills had been at work with boards in the forecastle. When it began to be dusk and the seine-boat had been cleared of all its equipment the skipper had us bring on deck the framework of boards that he and his cook had been manufacturing. Piece by piece it was passed over the rail and set up in place on the rail of the seineboat. When completed it was not unlike an inverted M, the framework extending beyond each rail of the seine-boat about eight feet. At either end an upright

board had been made secure by cross braces nailed near the bottom of the framework. At the tops of the two uprights smaller boards had been nailed which were intended to serve for lantern-boards. This much we could make out as the work proceeded. It became clearer when Lew Mills appeared from the forecastle with two small lanterns. Around one of them he had placed the extra red globe that belonged to the schooner's sidelights, around the other he had the green globe. The lanterns were lighted and set in place, with a piece of canvas drawn over them to hide their light until it was needed.

When the device had been completed the skipper explained that he intended to use it as a ruse to deceive the watch aboard the Beetle and give the Nimbus a chance to escape in the darkness. He decided to rig up a drift-anchor which, placed astern of the boat—since the wind came from the north—would keep the lights faced in the direction of the Beetle while the schooner was making her escape. While we were chuckling over the prospects of outwitting the officials before the commander of the cutter should arrive upon the scene an idea popped into my head that we were needlessly sacrificing a good seine-boat to the cause.

"It looks as if you intended to give up a seine-boat

to save the Nimbus," I said to Skipper John.

"Yes, don't you approve the idea? We save ten thousand dollars by sacrificing a few hundred. It looks good to me," he replied.

"True enough, but why give up the seine-boat? She's worth saving after she has done her part in carry-

ing out your bit of strategy, isn't she?"

"Yes. But we cannot save the boat as we did the

anchor at Halifax. The risk is too great."

"What will you sell the boat to me for, after she is used as a decoy for allowing the Nimbus to escape?"

"One thousand dollars," he answered, laughing.

"No, I am in earnest. What will you give me a bill of sale for provided I do not come in possession of her until you have made all the use you wish to deceive the cutter?"

"Ten dollars, David. In fact, I'd give her to you if I did not believe you were deserving a better gift than a castaway boat that will be subject to capture by our enemy."

"I'll take her on those terms," I answered. "You will have to make out a bill of sale now, though. Also, I'd like a leave of absence from the schooner until I

get back to Gloucester."

"What kind of a scheme have you got on foot?" he inquired, while the crew stood about laughing at me and

my crazy maritime venture.

"I don't like to see a good boat like her to go to waste," I replied. "If you abandon the boat she may be seized by any one who comes along. If I can salvage her it will make just so much more money for my college bills. Suppose I remain aboard her. I'll trust to luck that some of the mackerel fleet will pick me up and tow me to Gloucester," for I knew well enough that many of the seiners would be passing in a few days on the return trip.

"You'll be seized and condemned at Halifax as part of the equipment of the Nimbus, my boy, that's what

will happen to you," said George Keene.

"Not if I know it, George," I replied. "Won't the boat be my own? With a bill of sale in my pocket, too? It would be piracy to seize me against my will on the high seas. If 'Cate Beers or the revenue cutter's officers try it they will hear from 'Pitchfork' Graham, I can tell you."

"You are right, 'Captain' Graham," said Bill Spurling, siding with my cause mostly because George

had taken the opposite view. "No man has a right to touch you on the high seas in your own craft. You've

got a clear case and law will back you up."

"That may all be true," interrupted the skipper, thinking only of the risk I would be taking to put afloat in an open seine-boat and of his responsibility for my safe conduct. "But I cannot allow you to undertake so hare-brained a thing as that, David. Besides, I promised your father that I'd look after his boy."

"No, you didn't, either," I contradicted; "you claimed that you had no boys aboard your schooner; and after what has happened on the Cape Shore I ask

you am I a boy or a man?"

"You're a man, David, every inch of you," he answered, earnestly. "There's all the more reason why you should not risk your life for a mere seine-boat."

"Some risk, that! Right in sight of land, with schooners by the dozen passing up and down the coast. Skipper John, I'm going in that boat. You've agreed to sell her to me. You'll have to lock me in the cabin if you keep me away from her."

Bill Spurling came to the rescue. "I think the boy has a pretty good idea, skipper," he said. "Let him go and I'll go with him, if you'll let me off. There's little risk for two and we may help some in keeping the

Beetle from chasing the Nimbus up so sharply."

After more talk the affair was settled my way. I borrowed ten dollars from George Keene which I paid to John Deane, receiving from him a bill of sale of the seine-boat. Bill and I took our oil clothes, a jug of water, a pail of food that Lew Mills made ready, some oars, rope and canvas. We bade good-by to the Nimbus and her crew as we clambered over the side of the schooner and were dropped astern. Skipper John spoke a kindly "Good luck, David," as he took hold of my arm when I got into the boat. At a given signal

the sidelights of the Nimbus were extinguished while my crew and I pulled the canvas from off our own lights. A red and a green light were still visible from the deck of the Beetle in the direction where the lights of the Nimbus had been burning. Bill and I were alone upon the ocean. The Nimbus silently tacked to port and disappeared from view.

It was some time before anything happened to me and my crew of one. We sat upon the thwart, each with an oar in hand keeping the seine-boat headed toward the retreating Beetle. Dimly to the northward the lights of the Harvest Home could be seen as she slowly overtook our craft. The Nimbus had been swallowed up in the darkness of the night within five minutes after casting off our boat. There was nothing to be seen but the smoky trail of the Beetle, the lights of the Harvest Home, an occasional gleam from the light on Flint Island, and the stars overhead. We conversed in low tones while we waited for something to happen.

We judged that the *Beetle* would steam southward for a time before her officers would decide that the schooner's lights astern of her were not keeping proper pace with the progress of the cutter. Our conjecture was correct. After twenty minutes or so when, we felt sure, the *Nimbus* was far enough away to escape immediate detection, the *Beetle* was seen to turn about slowly, back to where our seine-boat slowly rose and fell on the waves. She came back leisurely, apparently having no anxiety for the safety of the *Nimbus* since our lights were visible and the lights of the other

schooner were getting nearer all the time.

The officers upon the bridge of the *Beetle* were startled out of measure when they hailed what they supposed was a healthy American fishing schooner only to discover neither hull nor sails nor crew. They were

on the lookout with night glasses. When the cutter got close alongside our craft an officer hailed us from the bridge.

"Hello, below there! What's up? Where is the Nimbus? What are you doing here?" all the questions

given in an anxious tone.

"Hello, yourself," I replied, as if I was as innocent of the *Beetle* and her mission as a man from Hong Kong.

"What craft is that?" came out of the darkness.

"This is the Alders and Hemlock," I replied, "from Cow Bay. We're night fishing for mackerel. Keep off or you'll run into our nets," I shouted excitedly as the cutter came nearer. "Put your wheel over and keep out of those nets. Can't you see our lights? What's the use to put up lights only to be run down by such blank landlubbers as you!" I yelled at them as if in desperation that our fishing ventures were being ruined by the approaching cutter.

The officer gave a command to the man at the wheel. Before the cutter pulled away he inquired again, "Seen anything of a schooner passing near here just now?"

"Aye, aye, sir," I responded truthfully and tactfully, "one came from the northward, then jibed over and stood back toward Cape Smoke. Think I can see her lights now, headed toward us. What's the racket?"

"Oh, nothing. Just looking to pick up a schooner, that was all. Thank you," and the Beetle continued

slowly toward the oncoming Harvest Home.

They were scarcely a cable-length away when I sum-

moned my crew to action.

"Come on, now, Bill, we've got to get busy. Let's dump this tomfoolery stuff overboard and get out of the way. Put an oar handle under the framework on your side and I'll take care of this. Say when you're ready. Over she goes." Our combined efforts lifted

the framework from the rails where it had been nailed only too securely by the skipper and Lew Mills. It fell with a crash forward, the lanterns pitched into the sea and we dumped the framework over the rails.

"Now cut that drag-anchor away. We'll pull inshore a mile or two before the other fellows find out who each other is. There'll be some unhealthy talk aboard the cutter when old Quigley finds that the *Nimbus* has

outwitted the Beetle again."

We seated ourselves at the oars and pulled the boat lustily toward Cow Bay. The seine-boat had been stripped of everything in way of equipment, so we made good headway with only a light breeze stirring. All the time we kept a sharp lookout on the lights of the cutter and schooner. It was impossible for us to tell what took place when the two craft met and Quigley heard from his officers that the *Nimbus* had eluded their vigilance.

The lights of both craft were visible as the *Beetle* turned south again and steamed back at full speed to the spot where the phantom *Alders and Hemlock* had been netting mackerel. They raced past us while we were a mile away from them inshore. All the time we

pulled away at the oars and laughed at them.

The Beetle, after passing beyond our mooring point a mile, turned back to meet the Harvest Home near the scene of our late interview. They were too far off for us to hear any conversation, too near to feel sure that we would escape detection. After a time—and we judged they were making plans about the pursuit of the Nimbus—the Beetle steamed away in the direction of Scatari. The Harvest Home tacked and we lost her lights for the night.

"They have divided the sea between them," said Bill. "The Beetle will run outside a little way hoping to come across the Nimbus somewhere off shore at day-

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break. The schooner will look around here for a while. When 'Cate Beers hears that the Alders and Hemlock is night fishing for mackerel he won't be fooled so easily as the officer of the cutter was. We won't be disturbed again to-night, so you might as well turn in while I stand watch. It's ten now. I'll stand until one, then call you. We're likely to have a busy day to-morrow."

Letting my crew take the first watch, quite as a skipper should, I curled myself up in the bottom of the boat to sleep.

CHAPTER XX

THE BATTLE OF COW BAY

HEN I awoke it was broad daylight. The sun was just rising out of the eastern waters, the sea was calm and there was no sign of cutter or schooner on the horizon. Bill Spurling sat on the thwart above me where he had remained during the night. The rascal! He did stand watch until one o'clock, as he promised, then considerately forgot to call me for the remainder of the night. upbraided him sharply for disobeying orders, as a commander should, and in excuse for his offense he offered the incriminating apology that he must have "bobbed a kink" on the thwart. As a matter of fact he had not closed his eyes for the night, and one of them a "game" eye which always gave the appearance of needing more rest than his well one.

After performing my morning ablutions by scooping up several handfuls of the Atlantic ocean I wiped the brine from my eyes with a handkerchief that would have shocked Mother Graham's regard for things sanitary had she seen it. To my credit let it be said that I did rinse out the handkerchief and spread it on the thwart to dry, since it was evident this piece of cloth would have to serve me in a double capacity until we

should reach port again.

"It looks like a fine day for the crew of the Alders and Hemlock to continue their mackerel fishing," I said to Bill after my appearance had been more in the

keeping of the commander of a craft. "Suppose you see what there is for breakfast. I'm ready to be summoned at the call for the first gang this morning."

We overhauled the pail of food that Lew Mills had provided for our needs, selected a portion of its goodly store and, sitting opposite each other on the thwart, we munched and fletcherized the food in the absence of hot coffee. With the breakfast concluded, no decks to be washed down, no watches to stand, nothing to do but await the turn of events and the coming of a breeze, we gave ourselves up to the occupation of self-entertainment.

"It was mighty good of you to come to my rescue last night, Bill," I ventured, for I realized how thoughtful he had been and wished him to know that I appreciated his act. "It looked as if I was getting ready to make a scene aboard the Nimbus. You saved both the skipper and myself. Besides it would be lonesome sitting here on the thwart and waiting for something to turn up. A fellow appreciates any kind of company in a case like this."

"Yes, I suppose so," drawled Bill between puffs at his pipe, "it would be monotonous, no doubt," and I failed to understand why he should smile to himself quietly.

Our principal concern was not ourselves but the fate of the schooner. During the early hours of the morning the wind continued light so she would have to get away during the darkness, if she escaped at all. Perhaps with the return of daylight she had fallen a helpless captive of the *Beetle*. The absence of both cutter and schooner confirmed our fears that the worst had befallen the *Nimbus* and her valiant skipper.

The hours dragged along slowly. It was not until mid-forenoon that our fears were dispelled. We made out a schooner coming from the vicinity of Flint Island,

slowly swinging along in the light wind. It required only a glance at the schooner for Bill Spurling to iden-

tify her as the Harvest Home.

"I've looked for her too many times in thick-o'-fog on the banks, boy, not to know how she looks. I could shut my eyes and draw a picture of her that would stand up and sail away if you threw it in the water. We'll have a chance to chat with the boys from home

for a spell."

The boys were all there at the schooner's rail when the Harvest Home got within hailing distance of us, six of the crew being fellows from Comberton whom we had known for years. Bill and I remained seated on the thwart, Bill smoking his T D and I listlessly looking over the crew of the schooner. They were the first to hail us. Long before the schooner got within hailing distance we and our boat were considered an important discovery for we could make out a man with glasses spying us out and reporting to the others who we were.

"Hello, boys," called out Frank Willis, who hailed from the head-of-the-river district at home, "how goes it?" He spoke as if he would say more but did not

dare for fear his skipper would disapprove.

"Hello, Willis," answered Bill, taking the T D from his mouth, "how goes it with yourself? How many headers' have you got aboard?" Bill's reply was given with the unconcern of a man seated comfortably on the quarter deck of a schooner bound for home with a full fare.

"Oh, we've got about three hundred in the hold and

fifty on deck," answered the other.

I did not enter into the conversation since it would be beneath my dignity to talk with men below my official rank; it would be time for me when the captain of the *Harvest Home* should take up the conversation. I did wave my hand to several of the fellows at the rail in answer to their rather familiar greeting of "Hello, Pitch, how's the fishing this morning?" and pointed significantly at the bottom of the empty seine-boat.

Captain Beers, who was standing at the wheel, spoke to Bill as the schooner came abreast us. "Hello, Bill, what ye doin' here?" He could not resist the temptation to learn as much as possible concerning the events of the night before.

"We were 'owling' last night and made a set here," Bill lied very broadly. "We're, waiting for the

schooner to pick us up."

Everybody, including Beers, had to smile at Bill's reply.

"Take a rope, Bill, and come aboard," said Beers.

Bill looked at me, then turned to the commander of the Harvest Home.

"Thanks, cap'n, we're in no hurry. I guess we'll wait around a little longer. Something may turn up

during the day."

The schooner put about immediately and sailed southward. We watched her for a couple of hours. At the end of the time Bill espied a flag flying from her maintopmast.

"It's a signal of some kind. My guess is that she is signaling to the Beetle somewhere that she has made

a discovery."

"Then if you are right she'll turn back shortly and we'll see the smoke of the *Beetle* on the horizon within an hour," I ventured. "Everything is going finely, Bill. They haven't found the *Nimbus* yet. We must hold them up here for the rest of the day, if we can, and let John Deane get out into the Atlantic beyond all possibility of being overhauled."

A sea-breeze set in about noon. The sky became overcast and Bill predicted we would have an unpleas-

ant time aboard the seine-boat another night. The breeze was fair for the quick return of the Harvest

Home to the place where we were drifting about.

During the absence of the Harvest Home we rigged up an oar for a mast in the seine-boat and fastened the piece of canvas to it for a sail. Lew Mills had thrown the canvas aboard the boat to serve as a covering from rough weather and rain; but it served us well for a make-shift sail. Bill took the steering oar while I reclined on a forward thwart tending the sheet of the sail. With the coming of a sea-breeze our seine-boat made good speed under her spread of canvas. This skipping over the waters in the light seine-boat was the best fun of the whole trip. We headed the boat southward and met the oncoming Harvest Home within an hour of the hoisting of the flag at her topmasthead. In the meanwhile the telltale smoke from the Beetle's smokestack smirched across the horizon in answer to the signal from Beers. The cutter was headed toward Cow Bay again, doubtless deluded by the hope that the Harvest Home had found the shadowy Nimbus, now an easy captive, somewhere in the vicinity.

The Harvest Home kept in the offing until the arrival of the revenue cutter; then Captain Beers got into his dory and rowed out to intercept the

Beetle.

"Quite chummy, aren't they?" Bill commented as Beers mounted to the deck of the cutter.

The Beetle headed straight for the seine-boat, and we kept the boat on her course toward Scatari. When she was nearly alongside we heard the clang of the bell in the engineroom signaling for the cutter to slow down. Captain Quigley leaned over the rail and called out to us, "Stand by to catch the rope. Let your boat come up into the wind, there!" as if his mere command had power to check the tides of Menadon strait.

Bill was still at the steering oar. Instead of letting the boat come up into the wind in accordance with Quigley's orders he kept her off and sailed away from

the cutter's side. Quigley was furious.

The engineroom bell clanged again, the Beetle got under way and slowly turned about to come up with us again. While the cutter was turning Bill maneuvered the seine-boat into the wind so that we were a couple of hundred yards to leeward before the cutter got her course and headway. Then as she came on toward us Bill again changed his course and, to the surprise of all, headed the boat directly at the Beetle. We bowled along under full canvas sailing through the water as only a light seine-boat can. When we were within a hundred feet of the cutter my efficient helmsman called upon me to pull in the sheet while he jammed his long oar sharply to port and the boat sped out from under the very bow of the cutter just when they were expecting we would be run down. The bell of the Beetle clanged again, the cutter slowed down. The irate commander shook his fist in our direction as we sped away from him.

"Bring that boat alongside," he yelled to us, "or

I'll sink your craft with solid shot."

"Let go your solid shot, you bandy-legged Englishman," I yelled back. "You couldn't hit the broad side

of Cow Bay with your old guns."

Quigley was no longer to be trifled with. He gave a sharp order to his crew. We saw some of them hasten to the stern of the *Beetle*, and remove the canvas covering from one of the guns. Upon seeing this Bill turned the boat back toward the cutter, thereby deceiving myself and those aboard the cutter.

"What are you doing?" I objected, thinking he was to surrender to the officer.

"We'll keep close under the Beetle," he replied in a

low tone, "then they will be unable to fire upon us with their guns."

As the seine-boat neared the cutter a sailor stood amidships preparing a coil of rope to heave to us.

"Make fast to this rope," commanded Quigley.

We were eighty feet from the Beetle when the sailor stepped back from the rail before sending the coil spinning and uncoiling through the air in our direction. True as a pistol shot it sped to its mark, striking our boat about four feet astern of where I was seated, the end of the rope reaching across the boat to the farther rail. There was ample time for me to catch the rope but I did not act with my accustomed alacrity that morning. Scramble as I would — after I had hesitated until it was too late — I succeeded only in sprawling out in the bottom of the boat just as the end of the rope slid off the rail out of my reach.

There is a limit to most everything. For twenty-four hours the commander of the *Beetle* had been bamboozled by the captain and crew of the *Nimbus*. When I obviously failed to catch the rope after it had been thrown so scientifically Captain Quigley lost all that may have been left of his fast disappearing self-composure. He shouted to the men at the guns, to the men in the wheel-house and to others of his officers and crew about deck.

"Shoot the boat! Ram her! Sink her! Run her down some way or other. I'm sick of the whole dam'd Yankee lot of them!"

It probably did not abate his anger at all to glance down in the boat and notice the position of my hand as I rose from the bottom of the boat. Mother Graham would have been shocked far beyond the handkerchief shock of the morning had she seen her son deport himself so unseemly toward the commander of Her Majesty's revenue cutter.

Before the gunners could train their guns on us or the Beetle could get under headway again Bill shot the boat into the wind and we passed her bow to the starboard side, a breach of maritime etiquette that even mackerel seiners rarely practice upon another of their own kind.

"Crossing our bows!" thundered the infuriated commander to the man at the wheel of the Beetle as if he was responsible for the maneuver. "What in the name of Gibraltar Hill are you standing there twirling those spokes and letting that little cat-boat cross the bows of a British warship for? Do something! Run her down! Get away from the wheel! Let some boy handle this ship, he'd do better than has been done for the past ten days."

The man at the wheel withdrew from his place and another stepped into the house. The bell clanged, the cutter started forward full speed ahead. Not quick enough for Bill, however, for he dexterously turned the seine-boat about and ran across the bows of the cutter a second time. Bill was having the time of his life and I, the commander and owner of the boat, enjoyed every moment of the time we were using to delay the Beetle in the waters of Cow Bay. We were too close under the cutter's side for the guns to be served upon us. The impatient commander could not await until the

crew, "Man the boat!"

The cutter's big boat was lowered. Quigley took position in the stern, four men pulled at the oars and a fifth sat in the bow. They pulled toward us but we easily outdistanced them by putting about and running before the wind. Upon seeing this Quigley shouted for his gun crew to fire upon us. We saw the men at the gun put in the shot. Then, while they were conversing about some detail of the affair, Bill

cutter got away from us. He called sharply to his

Judiciously put our boat in line with that of the cutter. A shot followed but it struck the waters of Cow Bay a couple of hundred feet away from us. Before there was time for a second shot we had the seine-boat near the other and held her there by taking short tacks. We felt little apprehension for our own safety because it was evident, when a second shot struck no closer to us, that the gunners feared that their shots would strike too close to their commander's boat.

After chasing us about for half an hour Quigley desisted from further pursuit and put up an oar to have the cutter pick up his boat. Instead of being picked up Quigley, now fairly beside himself with rage, ordered out other boats.

"Put off the other boats!" he called as the cutter came up. "Surround them! Sink them if they offer resistance!"

Two other boats were lowered from the cutter's side. While they were getting under way for a new campaign we had time to look about us. The Beetle was a cablelength or so to our leeward. The Harvest Home, which had not entered the affray except as Beers had informed Quigley who we were, jogged back and forth a half mile away content to let Quigley handle his own affair. When the other boats came up toward us Bill circled about them and sailed back toward the Beetle, running before the wind. We passed close by Quigley's boat. He tried in vain to intercept our course but my helmsman was too wily for him. Pretending that he would run the seine-boat past the bow of the cutter's boat Bill held her to the course until we were fairly upon the other boat when he swung the oar around, brought the seine-boat suddenly on the other tack and we passed within a dozen feet of the helpless, raging captain in the stern. Both my hands were free this time. Oh, Mother Graham, what a boy you brought

up! I'm sure Quigley could have bitten a piece out of me anywhere had he been able to get hold of me. All the while his sailors were pulling lustily on their oars in full view of the disreputable Yankee who was taking un-

seemly liberties with their commander.

Now the three boats and the Beetle were in full pursuit of the Alders and Hemlock. It is doubtful if the naval annals of the great empire furnish a more thrilling incident - from our point of view - than was given that afternoon when our denatured cat-boat led the pursuing fleet in the riot of circles, tacks, jibings and wing-outs as we sailed here and there about Cow Bay. At times we were near enough to smell the breath of the enemy and hear the blasphemous trumpetings of the infuriated leader of the pursuing fleet. The cordon of boats would gather about us with apparent success only to be outmaneuvered by the quick wit and seamanship of Bill Spurling. Once I saw Bill take a schooner into White Haven in a gale of wind, which was a masterly trick of seamanship; but the exploit of the afternoon was a whole volume of lessons in the science of handling a small boat in the presence of others. Several times we were all but cornered - if the sea has corners — when by a quick turn the seineboat would elude the boats that were closing in on all sides. Always on these occasions the ill-bred owner of the seine-boat, seated comfortably where he could handle the sheet, made sarcastic and scathing remarks befitting the occasion. No bull fighter ever practiced his wiles upon the infuriated beasts of the arena with more skill and daring than Bill Spurling employed in his dazzling tricks with the steering oar that always resulted in timely, if close, escapes from the clutches of our pursuers.

At last, with the cooperation of the Beetle, we were fairly cornered with no apparent loop-hole for escape.

Captain Quigley gave orders to the men in his boat to ram the seine-boat. Bill did his best to avert a collision, but to no avail. As the cutter's boat came bows on toward our boat I seized an oar and swung a blow at the man in the bow. The blow took effect, as I intended it should, striking down the fellow's upraised arm and hitting him sharply on the head. He crumpled up in the bow of his boat as if his day's work was done, as it was. I dropped the oar quickly and seized the bow of the on-coming boat in time to fend off the force of the blow. Little harm was done to our boat, while the impetus from stopping the cutter's boat gave us a start in getting away. Not before I could give Quigley a piece of my mind.

"Next time you try that on me, sir, I'll split your head open instead of your man's. Don't you forget that, you lobster-faced bully! I'm in my own boat, doing you no harm, and an American citizen. You'd better keep off! Any further attempts to take this boat and I'll smash the first one who gets in range of my oar." I yelled this at him as we were parting com-

pany.

Right ahead of us was another of the cutter's boats that I had not seen. Quigley shouted for them to intercept our boat at any cost. Very foolishly they pulled in front of the seine-boat leaving Bill no chance to escape unless he ran them down. Good old Bill was game to the last but he did not want to get into further trouble. He started to tack the boat about but I would have none of it.

"Steady there at the wheel!" I called out sharply. "Keep to your course! It's their lookout; let them

get out the way!"

The seine-boat under good headway crashed into the other boat, breaking in the rail and knocking it over so completely that all the men aboard were thrown in a

heap in the lee scuppers, if boats have lee scuppers. Two of them were thrown into the sea but held fast to the side of the boat. We passed on by them without offer of assistance.

"Perhaps you'll know enough in time to let innocent fishermen alone," I called after them. But they did not. It takes a long time to convince a Britisher that he should desist from a thing he has undertaken to carry through. Two of their boats were now hors de combat, since one was capsized and its crew drenched, while in the bow of another was a man whose head needed repairing. Quigley signaled for the cutter to pick up the boats.

"Now what are the idiots going to do?" I inquired of Bill.

"Solid shot for us, my boy, with old Quigley handling the guns," he answered. "You have struck a British sailor, capsized and damaged a British boat and threatened bodily harm to the commander of a British warship. It's surrender or solid shot for us."

"How about yourself, Bill?" I inquired, thinking no longer of the seine-boat or of my own welfare but anxious not to put my friend into further jeopardy of

life or limb.

"Count me in to the finish, David. I've served under a good many skippers in my life but I never got mixed up with two such hellyuns as you and John Deane. I only wish the skipper could see this performance, my boy. I think, leaving all jesting aside, that we'd better pull alongside the Harvest Home. 'Cate Beers is aboard the Beetle and I know most of the crew of the schooner will stand with us against the Britisher, at least. But mind me, David; you keep your yawp shut when I'm talking with 'Cate Beers and his men. He has no use for you any more than he has for John Deane."

It was quite a different Quigley who boarded the Harvest Home half an hour later. He boarded the schooner from the starboard side, opposite from where our seine-boat was made fast to the boat-boom. Before his arrival Bill had had a talk with Beers, whom he found aboard the schooner. Bill had secured from me the bill of sale of the seine-boat and had explained our tactics to the skipper of the Harvest Home. Quigley joined Bill and Captain Beers at the wheel-box. Bill and Beers did most of the talking, for Beers saw at a glance of the paper how illegal had been the attempt of the cutter to seize our seine-boat or to lay claims against the occupants of the boat. The details of the conversation Bill related to me later, for I had chosen to remain in my own boat alongside the schooner.

Even Beers had a word that was favorable to my cause, although I do not say favorable to my reputation. In the course of the conversation Captain Quigley inquired who I was anyway and why should the skipper of the *Nimbus* entrust the execution of such a

wild project to the youngest of his crew.

"The young fellow and Deane are sort of chums," Beers said in explanation. "They have lived together for half a dozen years. Deane showed him how to box and I'm blessed if the fellow didn't clean up the whole American fleet with the gloves at Liverpool harbor. Nobody can tell what Deane would have done if they had let him loose among the crowd. This boy," he continued, pointing in my direction, "is a regular human devil when he gets started, not afraid of anything that walks or flies or swims. There's no telling what would happen, sir, if you tried to arrest him—bloodshed as likely as not and he'd take care his own wasn't spilt first."

"Human devil!" exclaimed the captain; "he's an inhuman devil, if there ever was one, what they call a

Canadian loupcervier. What's he hanging around Cow Bay for if he owns the boat and has got provisions aboard?"

"Just to delay you, to keep you here instead of scouring the seas for the Nimbus. He and the other skipper are the slickest pair of piratical villains you ever heard tell of," Beers answered in way of eulogizing two of his Comberton neighbors.

"Delay!" the captain shouted, raging in an instant at the thought of how completely he had been duped. "Delay is the game, is it? Damme, we'll see! Good day, sir," he said, turning to Beers. "I'll communi-

cate with you from Halifax."

He rushed to the side of the schooner and dropped into the boat. Never was the *Beetle* gotten under way in shorter order, never did she shove her bows more spitefully into the waves than under the command of

the disgusted Quigley.

That night Bill and I ran the seine-boat in the lee of Scatari Island and beached her. We slept ashore under the protection of the canvas that had served us so handsomely for a sail during the exciting moments of the afternoon's pursuit. In the morning we put off again, intercepted a passing Gloucester schooner and were taken aboard, with the seine-boat in tow. Five days later we rounded East Point and pulled into the harbor where we found that the Nimbus had preceded us by twenty-four hours. My greatest source of satisfaction was the possession of a good seine-boat, besides my share of one hundred and four dollars in the Cape Shore catch. Bill's satisfaction came in relating to his shipmates of the schooner Nimbus the exciting events of the marine battle of Cow Bay.

CHAPTER XXI

A STERN CHASE

URING the six weeks that followed the eventful Cape Shore trip life aboard the Nimbus resolved itself into quiet, uneventful days that mackerel seiners usually find in July. It is a time following the spawning season when the schools of mackerel have not assembled in large numbers preparatory to the great fall migration southward and when smaller bodies of the fish listlessly seek their food in the different parts of the Gulf of Maine. At these times one cannot tell where the mackerel are; they may be found off Chatham and the South Shoals, on George's Bank, along the Maine coast or well within the confines of the Bay of Fundy. It is a time when the fleet sails about a great deal searching for the fish. The relaxation after the strenuous days of the spring fishery was welcome to our crew. There were times when work pressed upon us in a way that reminded us of Cape Breton days, yet the busier spells were of short duration.

There came a day in mid-July when we made a great "killing." We were cruising at the time off the Isles of Shoals when suddenly the quiet waters parted for the schooling mackerel. Once more we sprang to the oars. The seas yielded their treasure in abundance to the young skipper and the deck was alive with the prized captives. We carried them as they lay on the deck to T wharf. Early the next morning we bailed out two hundred barrels of mackerel as fresh as the most aristocratic of Puritan tastes could desire. Before the eve-

ning had set in the Nimbus was again with the schooling fish. Night brought wind and storm in its wake but not until we had taken another hundred barrels of

fish from the ruffling seas.

Such lucky catches in the midst of the barren season brought John Deane again into prominence and marked him as the probable winner of the Comberton prize and high-liner of the fleet. Others made good catches during the month, Captain Beers of the Harvest Home being among the more fortunate skippers of the fleet. Yet nobody except persons connected with Hinds' vessels ventured to suggest that Beers was at all likely to outstrip John Deane in the race for the Comberton prize. Word did reach some members of our crew that Captain Hinds already was proclaiming how 'Cate Beers would be high-liner from Comberton. Several events happened during the month that led us to believe that Hinds and Beers were determined to win from Deane by fair means if at all probable, by foul means if necessary to accomplish their purpose.

We first noticed a spirit of vindictiveness toward our schooner at the Isles of Shoals. News of our good catches brought together the other seiners, among them the Harvest Home. One evening the fleet was well bunched together, jogging back and forth as they watched some schools of kyacks - for everybody hoped to discover mackerel among the kyacks. The Harvest Home, with 'Cate Beers at the wheel, bore down upon the Nimbus while she was on the starboard tack, and therefore had the right of way, and insolently sailed across her bows. Our helmsman put the wheel hard up to escape collision with the seine-boat of the Harvest Home that was towed astern. By so doing he jibed the schooner over on the other tack. No harm was done, to be sure, and we might pursue the mackerel as well on one tack as the other. Yet the insolence of the trick

was too evident to excuse it as due to thoughtlessness. Skippers of nearby schooners noticed Beers cutting across our bows and not a few of them made comments that expressed their feelings at the breach of etiquette. The affair caused an outburst of profanity and threatening from our crew, bawled in tones loud enough to be heard over the seas. But the vehemence of mouthy protestation could not undo the insult that had been heaped

upon us and our young skipper.

The offense might have been brooked had not the same thing been repeated the following morning under similar conditions. The Harvest Home bore down upon the Nimbus as she was close-hauled to the wind. The helmsman again gave way before the intruder, turning the bow of the Nimbus off her course and letting the main-sheet go with a bang. Skipper John was at the cross-trees watching for schooling fish and did not notice that his schooner had given way before that of his rival until it was too late to prevent it. As the Harvest Home slowly bore across our bows he called down to the man at the wheel of the Harvest Home in a voice shaking with emotion,

"Don't ever try that trick again, 'Cate Beers! I shall not be responsible for what happens if you do."

It was not 'Cate Beers' intention to receive topmast orders from this young skipper. On the evening of the same day we were out in our seine-boat watching a school of fish and vainly endeavoring to get into position to make a set. The fleet — a dozen sails — were all in the neighborhood. Several other boats were out, so that careful steering was required to prevent a collision. In the midst of the maneuvering the *Harvest Home* came up and deliberately sailed through the school of fish that we were trying to take. Such things happen among seiners but they are of rare occurrence when done deliberately. We were furious with rage but help-

less in our fury. One of the crew of the Harrest Home called out with an indifference that indicated how premeditated the act had been, "Excuse us, skipper, we

didn't notice your little school."

Self-restraint may be a virtue in a mackerel schooner commander but we were of the opinion that one could exercise too much patience at times. However much we wished our skipper to do something in vindication of the injustice and insults that 'Cate Beers heaped upon him at every opportunity we knew well enough that he had his own thoughts and plans, that time would vindicate him and punish his rival. But we were not prepared for the fullness of the measure of vindication when it came, which was not until we had cruised for

weeks in the Great North Bay.

A pleasing change came one morning late in July. The fleet had been cruising together for a week vainly seeking the body of mackerel. We were off Provincetown at the time, for a few mackerel had been caught in the Cape traps indicating that there might be larger quantities of the fish in the vicinity. On this occasion there was nothing to show that 'Cate Beers was on the war-path except that we habitually regarded him in that mood. It was no surprise to us, then, when his schooner, with a seine-boat in tow, repeated the Isles of Shoals trick and bore down upon the Nimbus when she was close-hauled to the wind. Ranny MacDonald was at the wheel. When he saw the on-coming schooner he called down the companionway to the skipper, "The old hellyun is up to his tricks again!" Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when the skipper called back, "Hold your ship to her course or I'll throw you overboard!"

Ranny needed no such warning from his skipper. held the wheel firmly until, with a leap, the skipper was out of the cabin and at the wheel. The Harvest Home was proceeding leisurely across the bows of the Nimbus. She was far enough ahead not to be in danger of being struck herself but matters looked grave for the seineboat and seine that were being towed astern. schooner passed, clearing our bowsprit by fifty feet or The seine-boat and its cargo were less fortu-By a turn of the wheel the boat could have been saved. 'Cate Beers was watching and expecting the Nimbus would avoid striking his seine-boat as usual. John Deane held the wheel without moving a spoke. The bows of the Nimbus crashed full into the sides of the frail seine-boat just as Beers shouted and waved his arms for us to avoid it. There was nothing left but a wrecked boat and a seine that was hopelessly entangled. The financial loss of the boat and her fixings was a small matter in contrast with the chagrin that the commander and crew of the Harvest Home suffered. They put into Gloucester to repair damages; but their coming had been heralded by telephone from Provincetown by skippers of the fleet who were in no mood to let Beers invent a story to cover his chagrin.

Thereafter Beers never ceased to molest, never stopped from pursuing the Nimbus by night as by day. It was a long chase that John Deane gave him, for the Nimbus eluded the pursuing Harvest Home on many a dark night leaving behind only a dissolving wake. Always the indefatigable Beers, with persistence worthy of better deeds, found us out and kept up the pursuit, watching ever for a chance to outsail our schooner in the chase for mackerel, to break up our schools of fish and to molest us furtively and openly as opportunity

afforded and his ingenuity could devise.

We were not surprised one morning to find a seineboat missing, the painter having been cut with a sharp knife. We scoured the neighboring seas for half a day before we found the rim of the rail showing above the

waves. Two big holes in the boat's bottom indicated clearly where the fifty-pound purse-weights had been hurled through the frail bottom before the boat had been abandoned by Beers' crowd of thieving rowdies for his was the only schooner in the vicinity on the night of the theft.

With the coming of August the fleet gave up their attempt to find mackerel in the New England waters and prepared for the long trip to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. For the second time during the season the Nimbus put into Comberton to lay in a stock of provisions and prepare the schooner for the hard trip ahead. Of course

the Harvest Home followed her into port.

CHAPTER XXII

A FAIR EXCHANGE

AVID, run up to the store and get three more flat brushes, four inches wide," Captain Deane called out to me in the mid-afternoon. "We must get this side of the schooner done before

night comes on, if possible, so hurry."

My hands were begrimed with mud and paint for the crew were scraping and painting the hull of the Nimbus. The schooner had been beached on a gravelly shore at full tide and the crew, during the few days that we remained at Comberton, were putting her in first class condition in anticipation of the long cruise to the North Bay. Since we were about to embark for regions where the Nimbus would be deprived of the privilege of shelter from storms except as she would run a risk of being taken by Canadian authorities within the three-mile limit, there was need of stocking her bountifully with water and provisions as well as getting her in good sailing trim. When I had removed some of the offending grime from my hands I hastened up the bank to the shore.

It was the first time that I had seen Velma Brandon in months. The blue-gray eyes, rosy cheeks and hearty smile drove the thought of flat paint brushes, four inches wide, quite out of my mind. One can see flat paint brushes even at sea but not eyes like Velma's. She was on the steps of Hinds' store, where she was employed during the summer as bookkeeper and clerk.

"Hello, Velma," I called out as I was passing on-

ward to the other store, "are you still speaking pieces

on Friday afternoons, as you used to?"

She answered with a toss of her head indicating that if pieces were to be spoken she could do the job as well as the next one. Then she inquired with no little interest, "Where are you bound, David?"

"Oh, just up to the other store to get something, I have forgot just what," I answered, pushing up my cap in a way that showed my indefiniteness of purpose.

"Why don't you come in a minute while you are thinking of your errand? There's something I want

to talk with you about."

I did want to go in, all right, but was uncertain what kind of a reception I should encounter if either Seth Hinds or Captain Beers was in the store. So I inquired guardedly, "Who's in there?"

The girl laughed merrily. From what she had heard of my exploits during the past few years she thought that I was rather late in taking precautions against

being discomfited by my enemies.

"You needn't have any fears so long as I'm around, David. I'll keep off all highwaymen and robbers. Be-

sides there's nobody in the store now, anyway."

I followed her into the big store where, according to the boast of the proprietor, one could secure anything from a cambric needle to a goose-yoke. The front part of the store was given over to groceries and dry goods of varying sorts and uncertain ages. The back store, separated from the front by slide-doors, was packed with grain, farming implements and fishing tackle enough to supply the grand-bankers of Comberton. Between the front and back parts of the store was an office, partitioned off from the rest of the store, with one door and several windows. The bookkeeper worked here when she was not waiting upon customers. Not all of the little room was given over to the books, for

kegs and barrels were ranged about the wall and an assortment of oil clothes filled the corner farthest from the entrance.

"Come in here where we can talk without being overheard," the girl said as she led the way to the inner room. I felt a bit uneasy being taken right into the sanctum sanctorum of Seth Hinds, for he might appear at any moment. Although I had little concern for myself, I wondered all the while what he might think of his clerk inviting one who was persona non grata into the very throne-room itself.

"You ought not to do this," I remonstrated. "What will old Hinds say if he catches me in here?"

"Don't worry about me, David. I'll take care of you, and I've been doing the same for myself for a couple of years back. I know more about Mr. Hinds than is good for him, and he knows it. That's why I wanted to talk with you. Now listen, and listen quick, for he is likely to be back any time."

We leaned against the tall shelf that served for a bookkeeper's stand and while she talked she kept looking at the entrance to the store to anticipate any trou-

ble from that direction.

"Seth Hinds, as you probably know, has little use for you or Captain Deane. He has done more than you think to try to break up Mr. Deane's fishing this year and he will continue until he succeeds. That is why Captain Beers has followed you for the last six weeks. They intend to drive the Nimbus from the New England fishing grounds to the Bay. They have little chance while the schooner is in American waters to get her in the clutches of the Canadian cutters; but if they can once get the schooner into North Bay they intend to do all in their power to have her captured and taken to Halifax. They have planned to seize the schooner while she is going through the Gut of Canso, if Captain

Deane attempts that route. So be on your guard. Don't go into any harbors, especially Port Hawkesbury and Souris, in Prince Edward Island. Beers will watch you all the time. Those are the orders he got last night from Hinds. I ought not to tell you this

but Mr. Deane must know the danger."

Here I interrupted her to inquire, "Whom do you mean by Mister Deane? Do you mean John?" I knew well enough that she did, only I wanted to see what effect the question would have. Velma Brandon had known John Deane as long and as intimately as she had known me; so far as I could see she had no need to mister him. She blushed at my question as prettily and completely as I could desire and somewhat more than she wished.

"We haven't any time for your foolish questions, David. As I was saying—" She looked up startled, then exclaimed as we saw both Hinds and Beers mounting the steps of the store, "Quick, David, get behind those oil clothes in the corner. Don't move till I can get you out of here. Mercy, what if they find you!"

I hustled into the far corner where I took shelter by concealing myself behind the oil clothes. There was a barrel in the corner which furnished me with a comfortable seat. Lucky for me, because I had a long wait ahead. Velma was busying herself with her books even before I got into concealment. The two were engaged in conversation as they entered. For a time they were in the back store and the sound of their voices came indistinctly into the office. No word came from Velma except as she once left the office to wait upon a customer. Presently Beers and Hinds came into the office. One subject only was on their minds—that of putting John Deane out of the running for the season and getting his schooner into the clutches of Canadian authorities.

"Dammit, Beers," exclaimed Hinds, bringing his fist down on the day-book with a crash, "you've got to get You are running well with him now so far's stock is concerned. If he leads you by a few thousand at the end I can fix my accounts so't you'll lead him. There's a cool thousand for you there, just as I have planned all along, for you to get. Then you've got the ship's papers. Corner his schooner somewhere and it's ten thousand for us. Remember, the one that's got the papers gets the ten thousand. That was what I writ the Halifax folks and they agreed to it, five from them, five from me, provided you keep hold of the papers. You done a good day's work when you euchered old Quigley out of the papers. He'll never examine the envelope till the schooner is captured; then you'll have the papers and he'll have the envelope. But you and me split even, you know, at the end. Six thousand net for your summer's work besides a mighty good fishin' stock. You'll own your own craft another year, old man."

Beers entered into the plans of his chief with all eagerness. Hinds owned him, more as a result of circumstances than of any lack of positive qualities, for Beers was every whit as capable as Hinds but less fortunate in worldly goods. While Hinds could plot and plan there was nobody along the seaboard who could carry out the plans better than Beers.

He was a different type from his master,—bold and fearless when at sea, a tremendous worker, capable as a seaman and enthusiastic in all that he undertook, whether for himself or for the man who owned him. He would accomplish by a bold stroke what Hinds might attempt to do through chicanery. When he was ashore Hinds owned him body and soul. In his youth he had learned to carry out the orders of his chief without question; for many years Hinds had manipulated the

accounts of the firm in a way that invariably showed his favorite skipper to be high-liner of the firm's fleet but never in a way that allowed Beers to gain a controlling part of the schooner which he commanded. Now that there was a personal reward ahead of him greater than any he had ever hoped for, Beers let scruples go to the winds. He reconciled himself, if he felt the need for it, by his practice of doing whatever his master expected him to do.

"I felt like the papers belonged to our concern," Beers said in reply to Hinds and in justification of his

trick upon the Canadian officers.

"It was me that told the cutter folks about the Nimbus off Liverpool harbor and again at Aspey Bay; besides we left filling up the schooner with mackerel that day to take Quigley to his own cutter and fooled around two more days trying to p'int the blasted schooner out to him. But for that dam'd Graham

youngster I'm not so certain we would, too."

This was news, indeed. The papers of the Nimbus were in the possession of Beers; he had filched them from Quigley, and the reward of ten thousand dollars for the capture of the Nimbus was conditioned upon the holding of her papers. No wonder that Beers had hounded John Deane day and night while we were cruising in American waters. We were even now preparing to sail to the very regions where Beers could betray the schooner into Canadian hands and stand by to catch a pot of gold worth ten thousand dollars.

As I listened to Beers, an idea came into my head, one of those rare moments in my life; it was followed almost immediately by a second idea. All this time John Deane was wondering what had become of me and the flat paint brushes, four inches wide. I was doing something better for him than getting paint brushes, it is true, although all thought of brushes had vanished

from my head after the first words with Velma Brandon.

"Now," continued Beers in an undertone, for other customers had entered the store, "my plan is to stick close to him until he rounds Cape Sable; then we'll scoot on ahead and take the officer aboard at Halifax in time to join the Nimbus when she comes up. If he attempts to go through the Gut we've got him dead sure, for he'll be within a mile of Canada on either side. No excuse for him at all, for he will be sailing without ship's papers. The cutter'll be on the watch for us at Hawkesbury and if I don't mistake my fish John Deane'll be out a nice schooner within five days after he leaves this little port. Them papers'll do the job slick enough," and to emphasize his prediction he took an envelope out of his pocket and displayed the contents to Hinds. The two pored over them a minute.

"Better leave them with me till you get ready to sail," Hinds said. "I'll put them in the safe for you. Now don't be a bit anxious what cargo of fish you bring back from the bay. They's jest one thing we want

and you are to get that."

After a few minutes the two men stepped out of the office. I was watching both men furtively but found no opportunity to make my escape; as a matter of fact I was no longer anxious to get away. My mind was bent on something more alluring. On the ledger-book lay an envelope that I wanted. If Beers could filch from Quigley why couldn't I do the same from him? Besides, the papers belonged to the Nimbus and her commander. Hinds came in from the back store but did not enter the office. Presently Beers left the store. I waited, not daring to stir from my position. If I was discovered I had made up my mind to grab the papers and make a fight for it to get them to John Deane. But it would be better to secure them by diplomacy, if

possible. So I waited. Once Velma slipped into the office. I remained quiet, so much so that she felt in the corner to make sure I had not slipped out. Then Hinds came in. Velma busied herself with her books and Hinds took up the envelope that contained the papers of the Nimbus. It was getting near six o'clock.

"If you'll go to supper now I will tend store until you get back," his pretty clerk told Hinds, without looking up from her books. "I have got some work on my daybook I'd like to do before I go home for the

night."

Very true and also very artful. Hinds would be ready in a minute. He opened the envelope, it was a big one tied about with attached strings. He slipped the ship's papers from the envelope, carefully folded a sheet of paper that was on the desk and placed it in the envelope. The ship's papers he placed in a large yellow envelope and shoved them in a pigonhole above the writing desk. Before he left the office he opened the safe and carefully put the envelope inside that he wished Beers to have in safe keeping. Then he left the store.

"Now get out of here just as quick as you can, David," said Velma Brandon, nervous and fidgeting that I had been so long in concealment with the two men so close to me.

"All right," I said, "just as soon as you put up a pound of your best candy for me. What system of bookkeeping do you use, Velma?" I inquired, stepping to the desk and pretending to look over the ledger. She went to the candy counter to fill my order. I followed the example of my worthy elder, Mr. Hinds, by slipping the papers of the Nimbus from the yellow envelope into my pocket; then I folded a bill-head and inserted it in his envelope, carefully sealing the same before I put it back in the pigeon-hole.

"The candy is worthy a queen," I exclaimed, tasting some and returning the bag to her after making payment. "This with my compliments," I insisted, "if not for yourself alone, to divide with your pretty sister. What shall I say to Mister Deane?"

"The same that I do to my pretty sister," she re-

plied with a toss of her head as she dismissed me.

Instead of returning to the schooner I went home where I knew supper would be waiting for me. There I found John Deane.

"You're a pretty sort of a messenger boy, aren't you?" he exclaimed half in jest, half in earnest as I slipped into my chair at the table. "Where have you

been playing hookey all the afternoon?"

I made no bones of telling him nearly all that had taken place. I did not mention that the ship's papers were in my possession simply because I thought I foresaw where it might be to his advantage some day if the papers were in the possession of one of his friends instead of in his own hands. Of course I acquainted him with the conditions relating to the ten thousand dollars' reward and that the main object of Hinds and Beers was to make sure of securing it. There would be a right moment to tell him about my seizing the papers. That would come as a welcome surprise to him. Besides, the best way to keep a secret is not to let others know you have one; if I made no mention of having the papers in my possession nobody in Comberton, not even Velma Brandon, would know where they were. When I had concluded my story the skipper agreed that I had acquitted myself properly and forgave me for not getting the brushes.

"I got blushes for you instead of brushes," I answered.

"How was that?" he inquired, off his guard. As I repeated the incident of the afternoon he kept his eyes

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upon his plate very attentively while a deep red color stole over his features. He turned the matter aside by commenting out loud, "So they think they are driving me into Canadian waters, do they?"

CHAPTER XXIII

THROUGH NARROW STRAITS

HE day we left the little port on the last voyage of the season was one long to be remembered by the people of Comberton. There was something uncanny in the thought of the Harvest Home forever dogging the trail of the Nimbus. Comberton could not reconcile itself to the thought of constant strife and enmity existing between two schooners from the same port. For the most part, their sympathies were with the young commander of the Nimbus, even though there were many who had relatives and friends aboard the other vessel. The people stood by John Deane as a matter of principle. He had made his way in Comberton against tremendous odds and without a fair start. No veteran of the Comberton deep-sea fleet had ever come so near being a hero with his neighbors as this young man who, in a single season, had won for himself a place in the front ranks. They set their hopes high on John Deane, too, because he was being opposed at home by the most influential, if not the most unscrupulous, citizen of the town and dogged on the high seas by as able a seaman as the wharves of Comberton had furnished in a decade, a man whose mind was obsessed with the desire to carry out the mandates of his chief. It was not strange, then, that all Comberton should be at the wharves to see us off.

It made a striking picture to the onlookers as the two schooners, built and owned and for the most part

manned at the port, disappeared together under full sail beyond the bend of the Latona river. Far more striking was the home coming of the crews after that memorable cruise to the North Bay! There were men on the schooners' decks whose bodies would be broken before they should see the wharves of Comberton again. Others of them, strong men, were embarking on their last voyage to the ports of men. Nobody knew it at the time, but that was a memorable day in the annals

of the fishing village.

Captain Decatur Beers, instructed in all points of his campaign by the master mind at Comberton, kept within respectable distance of our schooner until we turned the bows of the Nimbus to the eastward after passing Cape Sable. At this place we came up with two schooners from Gloucester, also bound for the North Bay. We kept along with the others until the fog shut them from our view a few miles to the west of Cape Canso. The Harvest Home, on the other hand, after making sure that the Nimbus was bound eastward along the Nova Scotia coast, set all her lighter sails and soon left us far astern. Late the following day when we had passed Halifax a schooner put out from the harbor and followed us eastward. We had no reason to dispute Clint's assertion that she was the Harvest Home.

It mattered little to us, we thought, when we awoke the next day to find the wind from the south and a light fog shutting in around us. Hinds and Beers had concluded that John Deane would, if half a chance were given him, attempt to reach North Bay through the narrow Gut of Canso. We, too, aboard the Nimbus had been discussing the question ever since we left the wharves of the Latona behind and the consensus of opinion was that our skipper would take a chance anyway, unless it became evident when we reached the

vicinity of the straits that such a course would be foolhardy. When the kindly fog settled about us with its protecting neutrality all uncertainty of our course dis-

appeared.

The Gut of Canso is a narrow strait of water between Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island, connecting the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the Atlantic. Its channel is deep and narrow, so that vessels find a navigable course through the strait at all times. The adjacent shores are scarce a mile apart and rise from the water's edge in bold banks on either side. The passage through the Gut of Canso saves vessels bound for the Gulf of St. Lawrence several hundred miles that would be necessary in sailing around Cape Breton Island. In this narrow passage where the schooner would be within less than a mile of either shore those who conspired against John Deane had carefully laid their plans to seize the Nimbus and take her to Port Hawkesbury, the nearest harbor available. We welcomed the fog that would conceal our schooner from her pursuers while making the passage through the Gut of Canso, and Captain Beers welcomed it because he knew John Deane well enough to be sure that the young skipper would take advantage of the good fortune, in the shape of the fog, that had come to him. We were sure of eluding our pursuers, they felt certain of making a capture. As the events proved neither was right.

When the schooner reached the vicinity of Cape Canso it was not difficult in the light breeze to pick up the doleful warnings of the fog diaphone off Cranberry Island. After the foghorn had been located and the schooner had run close up to it Skipper John turned to Bill Spurling, his trusted navigator, and inquired,

"Can you take her through the Gut, Bill?"

"Take her through or dump her on old Ceberus," was the noncommittal answer that Bill gave.

"Well, we don't want to wade ashore to-night, so you had better take her through instead of bumping Ceberus," retorted the skipper. "It looks like the Harvest Home and the Canadian cutters would have some fine pickings to locate us in this fog. But we've got to go mighty careful not to pile her up on the shore."

"I can't see, skipper, why you are so anxious to go through the Gut; you know well enough that the Canadian officials have no more right to take the *Nimbus* in here, though we are within half a mile of the shore, than they have out in the open seas," this from George

Keene, the sea-lawyer.

"Because"—the skipper started to make reply to Keene but hesitated before others of the crew. After we had gone half a mile further he got a chance to explain quietly to Keene, as I learned afterwards, that he no longer claimed the right to sail the seas without liability of capture from any source. He had learned that sailing a vessel without papers made her liable to seizure by any nation whatever, although in the scene at Aspey Bay he assumed, and the commander of the Beetle did not doubt the assumption, that he was accountable in this particular to his own government only. So this was the risk that he was taking, not only through the Gut of Canso but also in all waters. Day and night there hung over him a cloud of uncertainty; he never felt sure that an approaching vessel might not be one with a warrant to seize his schooner. He feared to have strangers come aboard the schooner lest they might be the bearer of a warrant for his own arrest as well as the seizure of the schooner. It was a big burden resting upon him; yet he assumed the risk rather than turn the schooner over to her owner, Captain Ober.

"I have taken the schooner for the season," he said in explanation of his conduct. "Her papers have been lost while under my command. Eventually she will be seized and condemned for sailing the seas without license, I feel sure. To safeguard Captain Ober's rights I have already made terms with him for the sale and transference of the schooner to myself. I have bonded my labor and my time virtually to the payment of the price of the schooner. I must get her worth out of her before she is seized and taken from me. That is why I am taking risks. It is only a matter of time, probably, before she is condemned; but she will pass from my control not by rotting at a wharf but with all sails spread."

Bill was handling the wheel with Ranny MacDonald at his elbow. Ranny was a native of Cape Breton, his home being a few miles north of Ship Harbor; so he was familiar with the narrow channel through which we were endeavoring to sail. MacEachern, another of the crew hailing from the same town, was sent up forward to watch with Clint. The crew were to remain on deck to be ready for action at all times, and word was passed forward not to have the foghorn blown except when the watch made out approaching vessels, that our pursuers might have the less to warn them of our whereabouts.

"How are you heading her, Bill?" inquired the

skipper.

"Straight for Peninsular Point from the buoy. We'll run half a mile or so to the eastward of Ceberus in this way. Keep a sharp lookout on the log; it's thirteen and a half miles to Ceberus. We're running six knot in this breeze and the tide sets in about another knot in that part of Chedabucto Bay. So I reckon we ought to be past the rock or on it in a couple of hours, easy."

The veteran of a hundred gales spoke as if there was doubt about his ability to get the schooner safely past the Ceberus, a dangerous rock which is awash and lies directly in the approach to the Gut from Cape Canso. We felt little concern for our safety with the schooner in Bill Spurling's hands.

In a couple of hours the log registered fourteen miles strong from the whistling buoy. Our helmsman then turned the wheel and changed the course of the schooner

a couple of points to the westward.

"I calculate we're just about six and a half miles from Eddy Point light now. We'll clear Peninsular Point on this course all right and be picking up sound-

ings off Red Head in another hour."

True to his prediction we came across to the Nova Scotia side in safety. The lead showed fifteen fathoms for four miles, then twelve and ten. The schooner was nearing the shore; but neither light nor sound gave us assistance from the landward side.

"How's the log showing now, skipper?" Bill in-

quired when the hour was up.

"Six knot from where you changed the course last," answered Skipper John, after pulling in the log line at the taffrail and examining the log.

"Heave the lead again," commanded Bill.

"Seven fathoms!" came the answer from the forward watch after he had flung the lead far ahead of the fore-rigging and measured the amount of line with

long sweeps of his arms.

"Time to head her up to the nor'ard," said the helmsman as if giving himself orders. In another quarter hour the lead showed eighteen fathoms. The schooner's bows were turned sharply to the westward for according to Bill the entrance to the Gut was only two miles away. So far everything was going finely. We had encountered no craft of any sort and our navigator was taking the schooner along her course with the certainty that comes from experience assisted by the log, the lead and the chart.

As we neared the narrow entrance to the strait frequent blasts from foghorns were heard. Some boats were in the Gut, probably fishermen from Hawkesbury or Port Mulgrave, returning to port after a fishing trip in the outer part of Chedabucto Bay. Once we ran close to one of the boats in the fog. It proved to be a dory with three men aboard, two at the oars and the third using the foghorn. We hallooed to them through the haze to inquire where the channel was. All the men were in oil clothes and sou'westers. One of them answered, "You're in the channel now. Head her nor'nor'west and you'll go right into the Gut."

After we had passed them their foghorn sent forth its warnings through the thick mist about us. We wondered why they should blow so many blasts, for they did not appear to be in danger either of running into other craft or of themselves being run down. When another horn was heard a few minutes later on our starboard bow we concluded that the two dories were keeping track of one another in the fog. So they were but they were also keeping track of the Nimbus and signaling to one another, and to a third boat farther within the Gut, of the coming of our schooner.

Suddenly out of the fog almost ahead of the Nimbus came a strong call, "Hello, there! Is that a schooner?"

"Sure it's a schooner," answered the son of Cape Negro, who was leaning over the knighthead. "What did you think it was, the *Great Eastern?*"

"What schooner is that?" was the inquiry that came again from out the fog. The boat could be made out more plainly now with two men at the oars, one in the bow and another seated astern.

"This is the Dolly Varden, of Souris," our watchman called back.

"Give us a lift, will you?" said the man in the stern

of the boat. "We're bound for Hawkesbury. Tow us astern if you will, mate, and you'll help us a heap."

The man in the bow of the dory stood up as the two craft approached and threw the painter across the ship's rail. The men at the oars kept their eyes sharply on their work to bring the dory alongside without upsetting her as the schooner slowly forged ahead. The man in the stern of the boat did not look up; he watched the men at the oars and with a gesture, first with one hand, then with the other, directed their rowing. As the boat swung alongside one of our crew seized the painter and passed the end under a cleat. The man in the bow was the first to board the schooner, followed by the men at the oars. All wore sou'westers pulled down over their faces.

John Deane was standing near the wheel. When the men climbed aboard he moved forward near the mainrigging. He had no thought in his mind except to give a fellow fisherman a lift and had started to make sure that the men got aboard all right. It occurred to him also that the fishermen might prove helpful in navigating the schooner through the strait. The last man aboard the dory seized the schooner's rail and scrambled nimbly to the deck. He turned toward the quarter and tipped the brim of his sou'wester up.

The man was our neighbor, Decatur Beers.

CHAPTER XXIV

MISTS AND MYSTERIES

T last Decatur Beers was master of the situation. The day toward which he had been working for months was at hand. His bold plan to get possession of the Nimbus while she was passing through the narrow Gut of Canso had been well managed. In spite of the thick fog, or rather because of it, he had managed to board the schooner and bring an official with him. He tipped back the front of his sou'wester, bowed in mock-heroic manner to our skipper, swinging his arms wide to his side as he made his obeisance.

"Good afternoon, Mister Deane. Let me introduce

my friend, Lieutenant Walden, of Halifax."

In the exciting moments that followed the boarding of the schooner by the four men John Deane had remained the coolest man on the ship. The dreaded hour when the schooner must be surrendered had come. Possibly he had anticipated the unhappy event too many times to be disturbed by its actual consummation; at least, he gave no sign of embarrassment. It would be a rash act to resist the officer by force. So he remained silent, looking from one to the other of the men.

I knew that the key to the situation was in my hands. My thoughts flashed to my berth in the cabin where the papers of the Nimbus rested secure in my ditty-box, unknown by any other person in the world. My first impulse was to rush down the companionway and return triumphantly with the missing papers in my hands.

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Second thought told me that it would be better to watch the invaders play their own game up to the point where their exultation would be turned into swift ridicule. I felt a bit nervous, not for John Deane's welfare, which I knew was properly safeguarded; but from anticipation

of the oncoming scene.

It was the lieutenant's turn to act. After Beers' showy introduction, to which John Deane made no acknowledgment, the officer felt no little discomfiture under the steady blue-gray eyes of the young man before him. It was a new experience for him to serve a warrant by the undignified method of treacherously boarding a schooner which had offered assistance. So it was in half-apologetic manner and tone that he announced his business.

"My commission requires me to seize your schooner and her cargo," he began, fumbling in his pocket for the warrant. "We understand that you are sailing the high seas without the license that ships of all nations are required to have. You should be informed of the pur-

pose of the writ as issued."

Whereupon he began to read the document, which set forth at length the seizure and subsequent escape of the Nimbus, all of which was ancient history to his listeners. When he had concluded, he held the paper out for John Deane to examine, but the skipper made no move to take it. He glanced at Beers; the shrewd skipper of the Harvest Home was playing his own game and gave the officer no encouragement. Finally the officer said, "Make ready to accompany me aboard the Harvest Home."

He was startled by John Deane's exclaiming, "What if I refuse?"

"Then I shall have to use force as my warrant instructs me," replied the other, who was beginning to recover his usual self-composure. He had no doubt of

his legal right to seize the skipper and the schooner and already had thrust his hand into his hip pocket, as everybody supposed to draw forth a weapon, when Beers interrupted the proceedings. He had no intention to let the officer make the seizure in his own name, at least without a display of the ship's papers.

"It might be well, Lieutenant Walden," he said with a deference that he was not accustomed to acknowledge to any man, "it might be well to ask Mister Deane to

show his ship's papers."

"Better," I interrupted, "for you to prove what the warrant states, that Captain Deane is sailing the Nimbus without her papers."

"Oh, just as you say, sonny," Beers retorted spitefully. "Since you're running this business we'll do as

you want."

The officer, glad of an opportunity to make a change of front in what was developing into an uncomfortable situation, quickly assented to the suggestion. His hand went to his coat pocket, from which he produced a long envelope.

"It will take but a moment to satisfy him on that point," he said. "You should be able to recognize your own ship's papers which were given me by Captain

Quigley as I was leaving Halifax."

With that he opened the envelope and took out the folded paper within, which he held out to John Deane. Skipper John was about to refuse it when his eye noticed the freshness of the papers before him. Taking them from the officer's hands he unfolded the paper, holding it at arm's length before the view of all. To his own surprise and the utter confusion of the lieutenant, he unfolded, not the papers of the *Nimbus*, but a blank sheet of paper. He looked at it spellbound, great hope and joy coming into his heart at the revelation before him.

"There must be trouble with my eyesight, sir," he exclaimed, "but these are not my ship's papers."

With a look of relief and disgust he thrust the worth-less paper back into the hands of the astonished Walden. Words cannot describe the chagrin of the officer at the startling announcement of the man before him. He, too, stared wide-eyed at the sheet of paper. He turned it over, scrutinized it carefully and at last convinced that some mistake had been made he folded it back into the envelope. It was a moment of greatest humiliation for him. Nobody had sympathy for him. The crew were dumbfounded like the rest at the disclosure. Murmurs came from the crowd at his back, but a single gesture from John Deane quieted his crew.

"I owe you an apology, sir," the officer began. "There has been a mistake. I have no evidence that you are sailing without your papers." He turned dejectedly toward the schooner's rail to take his departure

in the dory.

The crew, seeing the sudden turn of events in favor of Skipper John, began to wink knowingly to one another and make unkind gestures toward the officer and men. Bill Spurling had been taking in the situation even though his business at the wheel had not suffered. He bawled out from his place on the wheel-box, "You needn't worry long what has become of them papers, mister, if you have been bedmating with 'Cate Beers over night. A man that bunks with 'Cate is likely to wake up with his whiskers trimmed, like Samson did of old."

The poor officer was badly discomfited by Bill's rude jest and the loud guffaws from the crew that followed. But the helmsman's dart had struck under the tough hide of Decatur Beers. On the instant he resented the imputation. He stepped forward and assumed an aggressive attitude.

"Perhaps I may be thick and perhaps not; but I can deliver the goods," he cried out sharply. "Lieutenant, seize Captain Deane and his ship. He is sailing without papers. Whoever does that is a pirate. Better run up the sign of the skull and crossbones, skipper."

Then before the astonished officer and the puzzled crew of the Nimbus he drew a paper from his pocket and

waved it dramatically in the air.

"Here are the ship's papers," he declared triumphantly to the officer. "You want the ship and I want the reward that goes to the one who holds the papers, ten thousand dollars."

He waved the paper aloft and jeered at John Deane as he did so. The skipper was overcome with the sudden change of the situation. A heavy weight settled on his heart that one of his own townsmen should prove himself the Judas among Comberton fisherfolk. The crew were indignant at Beers and not unwilling to seize him bodily and cast him overboard. Upon seeing signs of revolt among the crew the lieutenant called out to Beers and his husky Newfoundlanders: "Seize him, then, if you hold the papers. Put him in irons!"

At the word from the lieutenant the husky seamen sprang past Beers to seize John Deane. How foolish of them! A dozen men could not have held him at that hour. He met the men halfway as they leaped forward, reaching for each with outstretched arms and hands of steel; grasping one by the neck, the other by the shoulder, he whirled them together with a crash. They struck each other full in the face. One fell to the deck, where he nursed his bruised features from which the blood was spurting. John Deane held the other in the grip of his right hand. He whirled him about and swung him with all the power he could command full into the face of Decatur Beers. The two men, crushed and bleeding, fell backward off the brake into the run of the

schooner. With three men down in as many seconds the skipper turned upon the affrighted officer, who had

backed against the main-shrouds for protection.

"Now tell me," he cried in anger at the officer, "who is making this seizure and arrest, you or Beers? You have one document, he had another. Are you going to do the job or will you give it over to that thing there?" He pointed to Beers as he spoke, who was regaining his feet and wiping the gore from his face.

For answer the raging skipper of the Harvest Home yelled to the officer as he stepped forward toward him, "Here, take the papers and arrest him. We've stood

enough of his bulldozing."

The officer took the crumpled envelope from Beers.

Before he had time to act I interposed a word.

Imitating the example of Decatur Beers, I said, "It might be well, Lieutenant Walden, to prove to Mr. Deane that he is sailing without his ship's papers."

My words cut to the quick. The two men looked daggers at me. The officer glanced at Beers, who interpreted the look by shouting out, "Open it and read, if

he thinks we are bluffing."

Assured that Captain Beers was rectifying the blunder he had made, the lieutenant opened the envelope and took out the contents. He glanced at the paper and turned pale. Then he passed it back to Beers, who was staring bewildered at the officer. Beers took the sheet, a printed bill-head from Seth Hinds' store, and gazed at it in blank astonishment. He thrust his hand feverishly into an inner pocket in search of other papers, but it returned empty.

"Maybe Uncle Seth Hinds has locked the papers up in his store for safe keeping, Mr. Beers," I suggested quietly to the infuriated, speechless man before us. "Perhaps he would like part of that ten thousand him-

self."

John Deane turned to me as if seeking explanation of the happy turn of events, while Decatur Beers glowered hatred from his swarthy features. The only explanation that I gave was to remark, "You see, skipper, Captain Beers is a sneak, a sneak-thief and a liar, all three rolled in one,— a triple-plated skunk pretending to 'call' you on a royal flush when all he has got is a pair

of knaves on deck and two discards in the dory."

With a roar Beers dropped the worthless papers and rushed across the deck, raising his arm high in air as if to strike me down with a single blow. John Deane seized him as he went past and swung the man in a circle and dropped him at the feet of the bewildered lieutenant. In an instant Beers was on his feet again and with head lowered and arms outstretched rushed at our skipper. This time he was treated less kindly but not beyond the punishment he deserved. The skipper leaped backward to avoid his clutch, then stooping over he pushed the oncoming man's head down to the deck and held him with his face pressed hard against unyielding planks.

"You worse than skunk! You sneak and bully! You deserve to be towed astern by your worthless neck until the rope rots off! You ask for a 'lift' on my schooner, do you? You shall have it. Next time you board this schooner you'll do it in a different style than

you did this time."

While he was speaking the skipper kept Beers pinned to the deck, one hand holding his head firmly while he pressed a knee into the small of his opponent's back. It was a gruelling punishment but a kind one from John Deane at such a time. As he finished speaking the skipper lifted Beers from the deck and raised him above his head, the fellow struggling all the time to break the hold. He carried the hulk of humanity to the rail and hurled him with giant strength over the unfortunate man's own dory into the waters beyond. Beers twisted in mid-air

in vain attempts to fall face downward; but since he had more of the skunk than the cat in his nature he fell with

a great splash and sank from view.

While the struggle between Deane and Beers was going on, the two Newfoundlanders from the Harvest Home prudently slipped off the schooner's rail into their There they stood holding to the rail, their faces only peering above board and they themselves petrified with fear, although inwardly rejoicing that they had not been long in the clutches of the terrible giant of the Nimbus. When they beheld their own terrifying commander lifted from the deck and hurled over their heads into the sea as if he were so much junk, they cast off the dory's painter and pulled hastily away from the place where a single man could paralyze a crowd. The last we saw of the group was the reappearance of the captain of the Harvest Home in his own circle of foam, blowing water from his mouth and between gasps shouting for his men to rescue him from his predicament. The fog closed in like a slow curtain and shut the men from our view.

The officer, terrified at the scene enacted before him, was speechless. As the fog shut us from the men on the water he turned with a horrified look on his face.

"Sir, you are not to leave that man in the water!" he exclaimed. "What if he drowns?"

With a look of disgust John Deane answered, "I gave him only what he asked for, a 'lift.' He is lucky to get away with a bruised head in place of broken bones. Now you shall have what you wanted. Men," he exclaimed, turning to us, "put over the dory."

A dozen willing hands seized the gunwales of the boat and lifted it over the ship's rail into the water. Turning to the terrified officer, Captain Deane said, "You wished to be towed astern as far as Port Hawkesbury. Your request shall be granted, for I don't want the likes of you aboard the schooner with my men. You folks will learn before you get through dealing with Seth Hinds and that wharf rat there," pointing back in the direction where Beers and his men had been lost to view, "what a precious pair of villains they are and how much trouble they have made for your service in trying to put me out of business."

Seizing the officer he swung him clear of the rail to the dory's thwart below. The dory was towed astern, where the officer of the cutter service could read "Nim-

bus - Comberton" to his heart's content.

"How's she heading, Bill?" inquired the skipper after quiet had been restored aboard the Nimbus.

"Nor'nor'west-half-west, sir," replied the good man

at the wheel.

"Where do you reckon we are now?"

"Right off Ship Point but safe away from the Rock. We ought to be abreast Ship Harbor in half an hour easy the way the tide is setting us along. The wind is shifting to the west'ard and I calculate we'll be running out of the Gut with fair weather on our port quarter."

The veteran's predictions were accurate. Within half an hour the fog began to break above and around the schooner, indicating that an offshore breeze was setting in which would drive the fog back into the Atlantic. As we neared the locality where the skipper intended to put the officer ashore, I requested to be allowed to go in the dory with him. I called Bill from his faithful service at the wheel and we pulled the dory ashore in the fog while the schooner jogged back and forth off Stapleton Point. We landed him at a place where Bill said it would be a walk of three or four miles only around the shore to Port Hawkesbury.

"Follow the shore line long enough," said my com-

panion to the officer, "and you can't miss it. If you

hurry you'll be there before dark."

As the officer stepped ashore I held a paper before him and said, "Glance at this before you leave us. It may convince you that the *Nimbus* is less of a pirate

craft than you suppose."

He took the schooner's papers in his hands, examining them carefully. When he passed them back he said, half regretfully, "Thank you, young man, for showing them to me. But I am more bewildered than ever. How does it happen that they are in your possession?"

I drew myself up to full Graham stature before reply-

ing.

"Sir, with real men things don't happen. Bill, here, doesn't happen to take the Nimbus through the Gut in thick-o'-fog; he knows she's going through before we leave Canso. John Deane doesn't happen to make big catches of fish and lead the American fleet, he plans with a big vision. And you'll pardon me, I don't happen to have these papers; it is part of my business that they are not in your hands, or in Seth Hinds', who got them from Beers, or in Beers', who stole them from Captain Quigley."

With that I left him, stranded and bewildered, in the

fog of Tupper Point.

On the way back to the schooner Bill stopped rowing and, resting on his oars, said, "Pitch, you are the slickest liar I ever saw. You out-annied Aninias when you were talking with the officer there. What did you show him to convince him that you wasn't a liar?"

Without a word I took the papers from my pocket and passed them over to my companion. He had examined them a few minutes before I said, "Allow me to suggest that I may not be so great a liar as you think." His well eye twinkled as he passed the papers back. "Now, Bill," said I, "mum's the word about the

papers."

"All right, my boy," he replied, as he took up his oars again, "but you do beat hell, Pitch, I'll say that for you."

CHAPTER XXV

THE LURE OF THE NORTH BAY

HE spirit of Vikings fell upon us as the Nimbus, leaving behind the narrow straits of Canso, the baffling fogs and discomfited enemies, burst into the open waters of Saint George's bay. A fresh breeze from the westward tightened ropes and stays. Before us spread the inviting waters of untried regions. The headland of Cape St. George reflected strength of forest and field and rock. Sparkling waters of the bay beckoned us on farther and farther into the great maw of the Gulf and we sailed on confiding in their welcome. But how they deceived us! How they lashed us in their fury when we sought to escape from the Gulf weeks later!

We crossed over to Judique and coasted along the Cape Breton shore to Port Hood, famous for strong fish-It was a short sail across to East Point, where we turned west and north to follow the luna-shaped coast of that garden of the Gulf, the beautiful Prince Edward Island whose level, fertile fields spread out for miles in a succession of illimitable lawns as we saw them On we went to Tignish, where we fished from offshore. for a week; then back again with the fleet to East Point, all the time scouring the seas for the wily mackerel. Up the coast once more and over to Bradelle bank to have a look around there before we ventured across to the rocky Magdalenes. Always we were sailing or fish-There was no respite from work even though the returns were meager.

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How John Deane labored in those days! How he drove his schooner back and forth, how he clung to the cross-trees by day and by night in search of schooling mackerel, how he dragged the seas that were so reluctant to contribute from their treasured stores! We toiled heartily with him, grinding bait at the mill and casting the mangled herring into the sea to lure the mackerel from off the bottom, robbing night at both ends in that high latitude in our zeal to secure a cargo of fish, rising before the sun and setting the seine times that we could not remember while daylight lasted, and seeking our berths long after sunset, tired fishermen to be sure but trained veterans now who recovered quickly from the fatigue of the day.

The sun that was set to watch our labors by day never found us unprepared for the task before us, sweating and pulling through the long day, seldom getting less than a barrel or two each day, rarely catching a dozen barrels at a setting of the great seine, yet satisfied as time went on that every day's toil brought its reward. Sunset came late in that high latitude but it always left our seine-boat on the waters with the men silently pulling in the wet twine and finishing the toil of the day long after the sun had sunk below the low-lying landscape of Prince Edward. In the long afterglow we worked until the starry sentinels of the night peered forth to continue the watch which the great orb of the day had begun. There were dark shapes and forms moving about the schooner's deck then, making everything snug for the night and hanging the red and the green eyes of the schooner in the shrouds to signal back to the greater lights above that all was well aboard the Nimbus.

They were beautiful days that we cruised alongside Prince Edward, if filled to the brim with work at the oars and the seine. No day stands forth clearly above

the rest, they were too much alike in the circle of toil that came with them for that. Yet the month made one fine impression - fair seas about us, kindly skies above, the joy of working and eating and sleeping, the company of other schooners, and the low-lying island so near that we could almost lay our hands upon its greensward and the sight of whose homesteads gave tonic to the memory of our own New England firesides. There was an undisturbed satisfaction in the life off these shores, for we were slowly and surely nearing the time of our return to Comberton after a season of hardship and success. We got our fare of fish, too, got them from days of toil that netted one day five barrels of mackerel, another eight. In a week we had half a hundred barrels in the hold, in a month we had two hundred that had been literally lured from the bottom of the Gulf by the persistence of our tireless leader.

During all this time we were never free from the pursuing Harvest Home. Captain Decatur Beers did not relax his pursuit of the Nimbus and her daring commander for a moment. No sooner was he free from his encounter with us in the Gut of Canso than he put into Port Hawkesbury, where he took aboard a person duly empowered to seize the Nimbus whenever she should venture into the treaty waters of the Gulf, for he still clung to the belief that we were sailing without the ship's papers. However, it was a long chase that John Deane

gave him.

Once in the darkness of the night we slipped away from him and the rest of the fleet as we were seining off East Point. Before the *Harvest Home* again discovered our whereabouts we had sailed up the coast to Tignish and sent a seine-boat ashore filled with empty barrels; they came back filled with a fresh supply of water except half a dozen of them that were filled with new potatoes to replenish our larder. It was only two

nights after we had rejoined the fleet at East Point that John Deane slipped away with his schooner a second time, on this occasion to undertake a more daring feat than running within the three-mile limit for water

and potatoes.

After darkness set in we sailed across the bay to Port Hood, leaving Decatur Beers to conjecture as best he could where the doughty son of Comberton had disappeared with his prized schooner. When daylight came on the schooner was headed for the Gut of Canso. The skipper did not divulge his plans to any in the crew except to Cameron and MacEachern, the two men who lived in the vicinity of Judique. At the entrance to the Gut the schooner dropped the two men in a dory. They pulled away toward Port Hawkesbury, seven or eight miles away, and in another quarter-hour were lost to view.

We cruised about St. George's bay, making several sets of the seine and catching a few barrels of fish. We avoided getting near any of the boats that were fishing in the lower part of the bay. With the return of darkness the schooner boldly entered the Gut and slowly jogged back and forth from one shore to the other. Near ten o'clock some one hallooed to us. The schooner was turned in the direction of the shouting and presently we picked up the dory with the two fishermen. As they climbed over the rail the skipper greeted them warmly.

"How is it, men? Did you have any luck?" he in-

quired.

"Never better," replied Cameron, as he leaped to the deck with the boat's painter in hand. "We landed a couple miles above Hawkesbury, where we left our dory and walked to town. We met nobody who knew us except Lem Peters at his home. He has got one horse and will get another one for to-night. We are to land on the north side of the wharf, where he will have a lantern to guide us. The *Beetle* is anchored about a quarter mile from there. Lem is going to grease all his blocks and running gear in good shape so there will be no noise. Look's like everything will be all O. K."

"How about getting to the wharf?" the skipper inquired. "Can we get in easy and also get away

quick?"

"All you will have to do," responded the other, "is to run the schooner into harbor without much sail on her, so we can haul the sails to leeward while the schooner is at the wharf, then we won't make any noise lowering and hoisting them while in harbor. Have the oars muffled, get the seine-boat ready to tow the schooner to the wharf and we'll slip into the wharf without anybody's

knowing it."

We all began to see what was under way. John Deane was attempting to land his cargo of two hundred barrels of mackerel during the darkness of the night at the wharf in Port Hawkesbury. From there they would be shipped by rail to Boston while the prices were high. He would run a big risk of detection and capture, especially as he would be almost under the bows of the Beetle. The venture was worth the risk, however. He was dreading that day when, he feared, his schooner would be seized by Canadian officials, so he was unwilling to carry two hundred barrels of mackerel in her hold if he could ship them to market. During the early evening we hoisted a hundred barrels of the fish to deck where they could be rolled easily on to the wharf; the other hundred barrels were placed near the main-hatch where they could be hoisted out most readily.

The schooner moved noiselessly toward the harbor of Hawkesbury. When Plaster Cove had been left on the port side and we were within four miles of the inner harbor the friendly light from Stapleton Point served for our guide. As we neared the harbor the lights from vessels riding at anchor and especially the night lights of the *Beetle* served both to guide and warn us. While we looked and listened a light showed on the shore, as if a lantern was being lifted up and down. The bows of the *Nimbus* were headed confidently toward the swaying light, the lower sails were gradually eased off before the wind, and the seine-boat was pulled quietly ahead to tow the schooner to the wharf.

The men worked in silence on the deck and on the wharf. Lanterns were placed in boxes arranged to light up the men at their work but invisible from the harbor side. A horse was hitched to the hoisting-tackle and pulled a barrel of mackerel from the hold. While he was returning to the schooner's rail for another load the second horse took his turn at pulling out a load. There was a lively scene on deck, as well - men rolling barrels of mackerel up long planks over the schooner's side, others shoving them away and piling them in rows at the head of the wharf. The work went on swiftly and silently. There was no mishap and no miscalculation. Barrels kept coming over the rail in a double, uninterrupted stream. The last barrel was rolled into its place on the wharf as quietly as the first had been. There was no delay when the work was completed. Moorings were cast off, the crew in the seine-boat towed the schooner back into the stream with muffled oars. The men on the wharf had been paid for their night work, the horses were already headed for their stables, and Lem Peters knew just what he was expected to do in the morning in getting the cargo aboard the steamboat. It all seemed like a dream as it was passing, no voices, little noise, the quiet dip of the oars into the waters, the schooner slipping in to the wharf and out again as if impelled by invisible hands and then gliding away in the darkness like a nocturnal spirit of the

deep.

Was the risk worth while? We thought so after we had got away from the harbor far enough so that we dared to speak above a whisper. We decided that it was worth while two days later when we rejoined the fishing fleet and it became noised abroad how John Deane had stolen a night march on the vigilant Beers and the sleepy sailors of the *Beetle*. We knew so a few weeks later when the *Nimbus* returned to Port Hawkesbury and passed into the hands of Canadian officials. The one thought that came to cheer the crew then was that two hundred barrels of mackerel were in the Boston market, safe from hostile officials.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHAT DEADMAN'S ROCK SAW

HE Magdalenes treated us badly. Ever since I first stubbed about the shipyards of Comberton in my copper-toed boots I had heard old sea-captains tell marvelous tales of the far-away islands until Entry and Grindstone and awe-inspiring Coffin became magic isles of the northerly seas where only real Vikings of the day ventured with their ships and crews. were stories of swarming schools of fish, of bloater herring, and record trips made from the Latona river. But the wildest stretch of my youthful imagination never put me in actual contact with the fortunate isles.

Our passage from Tignish across to the Magdalenes was made in a northwest gale which roared past us as it rushed seaward through the Cabot strait. It left us on a Thursday morning under the forbidding rocks of Old Harry Head on Coffin island. Anchor was cast under the lee of the shore where we were safe, for a time at least, from the wrack of the gale and the dangerous Columbine shoals to the southward. There we rode at anchor full twenty-four hours before the gale subsided enough to allow us to launch the extra seine-boat

which had been carried on deck.

We had reached the Magdalenes, those rugged rocks that, grouped in a desolate bunch in the center of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, afford an alluring feedingground for herring and mackerel but meager and desperate habitation for the hardy fishermen whose living is made from these treasures of the sea. For three weeks

we pounded our way around the islands, like itinerant beggars driven from retreat to retreat as the storms shifted about, and only getting ashore when the weather was too inclement to allow fishing. Therefore we got the worst kind of an impression of the islands and the natives, of interesting natural bridges and ocean caverns that have been carved out of the rock by the might of the waves, and of the Magdalene pig, that omnipresent indicator of the homes of the island fishermen.

When we had been at the islands about a fortnight, hunting everywhere about the rocky shores for the best fishing grounds and finding only tolerable success to reward our long days of toil, a Saturday overtook us off Deadman's Rock, a sharp needle of rock thrust up from the ocean bottom to give color to a lonesome seascape and trouble to innocent fishermen. Toward evening, while we were about to make the last setting of the seine for the day, a schooner's sail appeared on the southern horizon. There was nothing strange in this, since we had encountered a dozen Gloucester seiners during our period at the islands; yet this sail attracted immediate attention because the course of the stranger was not changed an iota from the time she hove in sight until she reached us. While she was still a long way off the keenest sighted men of the crew announced that the Harvest Home was again on our trail.

"Don't it beat a school of dogfish how that old seacow scents us out!" exclaimed George Keene after Clint had announced the name of the oncoming schooner.

"There's no sea-cow to 'Cate Beers, let me tell you that, old boy," retorted Bill Spurling. "He's a water-bull, if he's got pedigree at all. When the mate of the sea-cow is romping at large about the seas it's a good plan to keep your eye peeled in his direction."

Bill Spurling spoke words of wisdom, as he usually did. Yet we were not aware how closely Bill's advice

should have been followed on that quiet Saturday evening. When the Harvest Home came up to us we were in the seine-boat. Lew Mills, as usual, was aboard the schooner handling her with practiced art. Skipper John was in the dory, pulling at the seine opposite the boat to keep the twine clear while the pursing-up was going on, and only fifty feet from us. The Nimbus was three hundred yards or so from us when the Harvest Home circled in near our seine-boat, sailing between us and the schooner.

In the twinkling of an eye Decatur Beers turned a bold trick. He swung his schooner about toward the Nimbus and called out in a stentorian voice, "Get in the boat!" There was a scramble and rush as the yellow-jacketed crew sprang over the port rail into the seine-boat and dory, both of which were on that side. At the same time his schooner turned toward our seine-boat and bore down upon us while the two boats of the Harvest Home pulled away quickly in the opposite direction toward our schooner. The Nimbus was in stays, just making a tack to come back in our vicinity.

"Look at the hell-hounds, what they are doing!" suddenly exclaimed Pevear, who was in the stern of our

seine-boat.

"They are going to board the schooner!" yelled Clint, calling out to the skipper from the vantage point of the boat's thwart.

We had little chance to see what they were up to for the Harvest Home bore straight down upon us as we worked, concealing the movements of her own boats and threatening to sink the whole lot of us. Skipper John sprang to the stern of his dory to cast off the rope that held the boat to the seine. Then he leaped to the thwart and seized the oars to bring the boat to the seine-boat.

"Pull that seine in quick, men!" he shouted out

to us,

We had been caught in a bad way. The seine was only partly "dried in "- it would be as quick work to finish pulling it inboard as to dump the whole seine into the water. In either case we were prevented from getting away to help Lew Mills aboard the schooner. To add to the confusion the Harvest Home kept coming on directly at us. There was nobody aboard save the man at the wheel, who seemed determined to make things so lively for us that there would be no chance to give aid to our schooner and her crew of one. On came the schooner headed straight between us and our skipper in the dory, threatening to rip the seine into pieces, threatening to overturn our seine-boat, but mostly threatening to run down the dory with Skipper John aboard. The schooner swept past through the middle of the seine, not twenty feet of water being between us and her sides as she ripped through the twine. Nobody had a chance to board her, although the thought flashed through the mind of many.

Decatur Beers was at the wheel, swart and black as ever. He gave us no look, for his mind was fixed on other things. He must delay the rescue of the Nimbus by running through our seine and tangling things up in a way that would keep us from the schooner; even to upset the dory and give his rival a ducking in the waters of the Gulf would serve his purposes and desires admirably. Whatever his intentions were, nobody, not even Beers himself, looked for the affair to turn out as it did. As his schooner coursed along toward our seine-boat it was impossible for the captain at the wheel to judge accurately how near he was running to the dory and its occupant. The Harvest Home came on under good headway; it was right upon the dory before our skipper could get out of the way, it crashed full into the bows of the dory of the Nimbus and passed on.

We saw the vessel strike, we heard the crash of splin-

tering sides, but none witnessed the fate of John Deane as the Harvest Home swept on and shut the scene from our view. None save irresponsive Deadman's Rock. As we anxiously watched it seemed hours before the schooner passed and the wreckage of the dory came into view. The waters were quiet save for the wake of the vengeful schooner. John Deane was nowhere to be seen, though we strained every nerve in looking and prayed only as strong men pray in the presence of a tragedy. One minute passed; he did not appear at the surface. A second, and the strain was breaking us.

"My God, what an awful thing to do!" exclaimed old Bill, with tears streaming down his weathered face

and years of age coming over him.

His were the only words spoken. The time for anger had passed. Prayers instead of curses were on men's lips. We were helpless before so heavy a tragedy. slipped off my boots and oil clothes and leaped into the water. In a moment I was among the wreck of the dory, pawing it over feverishly, rising up out of the water as far as possible and looking all about me in search of a sign of the missing skipper. Then I turned and plunged into the débris of net and splintered wood beneath the water time and again in the hope of rescuing John Deane should he be caught in the seine and held below the surface. Two others of the crew joined In an age that could not have been longer than ten minutes we worked furiously beneath the waters while the crew in the seine-boat pulled in the black twine, hoping with every giant haul that they might be so lucky as to rescue their beloved captain.

While we were absorbed in the heart-rending work the crew of the *Harvest Home* had boarded the *Nimbus* and taken charge. Not without due penalty, however, for Lew Mills was not a man to give up without a struggle. Two men's heads were cracked with blows of a belaying

pin, the two sprawled out on the deck at his feet before our valiant cook was overcome and beaten down by the

onrushing crew.

"See, they've lambasted the cook and got the schooner!" cried one of the men in the seine-boat, momentarily looking up from his search in the wreckage. We looked up just in time to see the last of the struggle, how men from behind Lew Mills leaped upon him and bore him to the deck, then thrust him unceremoniously into the forecastle and closed the slide. We stood help-less witnesses to the rape of the *Nimbus*, a burden too heavy for us to bear coming as it did full upon the disappearance of her commander. Our cup of sorrow and humiliation was filled to overflowing.

"What shall we do now?" I inquired, after I had been pulled aboard the boat completely exhausted by

my efforts in the water.

"Nothing at all, boys," said Bill, to whom we naturally turned in the crisis. "There's nothing that we can do, as I see. We're caught good and fair, or rather

by cursed treachery. We're helpless."

Instinctively we looked around us for an avenue of escape. There was none in sight; our own schooner was in the hands of the rival crew while the *Harvest Home* was off to the eastward of us a quarter of mile or so, drifting about in stays. We could not hope to board her and overcome Captain Beers, for the schooner could easily outsail us as we rowed. Deadman's Rock offered neither shelter nor food. It would be a ten-mile pull to the light on Amherst Isle, the only retreat now left us.

"What's old Beers doing out there, anyway?" inquired Clint, who had been watching the schooner for some time, trying to fathom the mystery of Beers' move-

ments.

"Leaving his crew to do the dirty work for him

aboard our schooner, that's his trick all right," retorted Pevear.

"No, you're mistaken there," interposed George Keene. "He never shirked any piece of dirty work yet. He sent all his crew aboard the Nimbus, if you'll notice. Wonder why? 'Cause he couldn't trust any of them to let him run us down the way he did and drown the best man that ever walked a Comberton deck!"

A silence fell on the men at Keene's words. Instinctively our eyes turned to the waters where we had searched in vain. It made us gulp even to think of the dastardly deed. Again we looked toward the Harvest Home, wondering why her skipper did not rejoin his victorious crew. While we looked the schooner tacked about toward us again. In the meantime the Nimbus, under command of its strange crew, also turned toward us, sailing by close-hauled in the wind. When the schooner was passing us one of her crew who proved to be one of the Newfoundlanders who had come aboard our vessel in the Gut of Canso, shouted out to us in derision, "How would you like to be towed into Hawkesbury?" He added insult to his words by waving aloft the end of a rope, signifying how eager he was to get us out of our predicament.

In the meantime, the *Harvest Home*, which had come up to the windward of our boat, turned sharply and bore down upon us, the helmsman luffing her sails enough to make it possible for us to board the schooner. At first thought we judged that 'Cate Beers was about to renew his murderous designs and sink us with our boat. The schooner came up slowly, however, as if to pick us up on the port side. We sat at the oars anxiously awaiting the turn of events, prepared to pull quickly from under the threatening bows should they be turned full upon us, also determined to board the schooner and

throttle at first hand the dastardly Beers if he should venture near enough for us to make boarding feasible.

The schooner came straight on, aiming to come alongside us. What could the man mean? Why should Beers pick us up while his own crew were aboard the other schooner? It would be suicidal for him. Yet we were willing to be present at the suicide. The bows passed us, the schooner was within striking distance of our oars when Bill Spurling called out, "Go ahead on the oars, men, board the cursed slave-ship. Don't spare nobody!"

We dug the oars into the water, the boat swung alongside the schooner and half a dozen men, leaping over the rail, started aft to wreak vengeance on the man at the

wheel.

"Make the boat fast to the boom, men!"

Could we believe our own ears? That voice, that familiar form at the wheel now dripping wet. John Deane, alive and in command of the Harvest Home! We rushed at him with low shouts of joy, then stopped short as we reached the house. On the deck in front of him lay Decatur Beers, dead as a haddock, for aught we knew. We stood gaping at the quick and the dead, open-mouthed and speechless at the sudden turn of events and the frightful sight before us. For Nature had never intended Decatur Beers to make an attractive corpse. There was no need for questions to be asked or explanations offered; the scene before us told all too well what had been enacted on the deck of the Harvest Home while we had supposed John Deane was drowned in the wrecking of his dory.

What a strange turn of events! The crew of the Harvest Home, except the captain, in possession of the Nimbus; the crew of the Nimbus, excepting our redoubtable cook, on board the Harvest Home; John Deane alive at the wheel of his rival's schooner, and Decatur

Beers sprawled limp and ghastly at his feet! Anger and resentment had taken the place of the grief that so shortly before had crushed our spirits. We were ready for whatever should come. If any of us was figuring in his mind how the exchange of crews on the two schooners could be effected without a free-for-all fight he kept his thoughts to himself. The blow had been aimed principally at John Deane; he it was who must solve the problem — part of the solution was writ in the limp lump at his feet — and we turned to him for a complete settlement of our troubles.

We sailed up to the Nimbus on the starboard tack, John Deane still holding the wheel of the Harvest Home. As we neared his own schooner he carefully noted the distance between the two vessels. "Stand ready to lash the schooners together," he said in an undertone to us. Several of the crew moved forward of the foremast shrouds with ropes ready, others took station

amidships.

"Here, Bill," said the skipper, turning to the strong man whom we had seen scarce a quarter-hour before with cheeks wet with tears, "lay the schooner alongside the *Nimbus*."

He walked forward quickly and stood on the rail, holding to the foremast shrouds. When the Harvest Home came within striking distance of the Nimbus he leaped from the rail to his own quarter-deck, where a dozen of the other crew were gathered. Not one of them stirred or offered to prevent his boarding the schooner; they could not conjecture what had happened to their own commander; there was no one to lead them so they were helpless. John Deane stood in their midst, the master of the situation, uncovered, his wet clothes clinging to him, his fists clenched and such a look of command in his face as we had never seen before in the man. There flashed in the minds of all the pic-

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ture of the young skipper defying and challenging the American fleet on the shores of Liverpool harbor. He had meant business then, he was in awful earnest now. Every eye centered on him. Something terrible had happened, or was going to happen, every man of Beers' crew felt with the first look at the skipper when he had regained his own deck. The Nimbus was full abreast the Harvest Home.

"Make fast!" came from our commander.

A dozen men sprang aboard the Nimbus and bound the two vessels together. With a motion of his hand the skipper directed one of his men to take the wheel of the Harvest Home. Some of the crew of the Harvest Home, unable to bear the strain that was upon them, edged quietly toward their own schooner. When they glanced over the rail of the Harvest Home and caught sight of the silent form of Decatur Beers under his own wheel horror held them in their tracks.

"Make our seine-boat fast to the Nimbus. Put aboard one of their dories and a set of oars, too," Skipper John called to his crew. The order was carried out speedily.

"Now, you pirates," he exclaimed, turning savagely upon the crowd about him, "get onto your own planks quick, before I hang the last one of you from the yard-

arm!"

The frightened crew did not wait upon the order of their going. They were not ordinarily cowards; but the uncanny feeling that had come over them stirred their most superstitious beliefs. They were only too glad to break away from the spell of the powerful personality which, while it was upon them, rendered them powerless either to think or to act. Like frightened sheep they followed one another, fleeing from the threat of physical torture only to encounter the horror of mental anguish, for as one after the other of them

leaped over the rail to their own deck they almost stumbled over the silent, repulsive object whom they served through fear.

"Cast off!"

The words were spoken with a tone that showed how John Deane was only too glad in his heart to withdraw from the scene of his most terrible struggle. Even while the schooners were drawing apart the form on the deck stirred, it uttered an awful groan and raised an arm upward which fell to the deck again with a crash. Old Bill Spurling turned his wheel over with a look of disgust on his face.

"What a shame," he said, looking aloft to catch the flutter of the pennant on the foretopmast head. "What a shame to spoil a good wake that way!"

Deadman's Rock was the sole witness of the struggle between the two commanders. We learned only a little from John Deane; he had been thrown into the water when the schooner crashed into his dory but had seized the bob-stay and thus been able to draw himself aboard the very vessel which had been aimed to injure him. Once on deck he removed his boots and moved silently toward the stern. Beers was standing by his wheel, looking back upon the scene of destruction that his hands had wrought. The swish of wet clothing caused him to turn. Standing before him was the man who he supposed had been drowned, without boots or hat, his clothes that had come so near being his shroud, clinging flat against his limbs, and a watery trail leading from the cabin back across the deck to the knighthead and to the would-be grave below that had been cheated of its Deadman's Rock might have told Beers that the young captain paused a moment after climbing over the knighthead to look back upon the waters and whisper hoarsely, as he shook his fist at them, "I've cheated you again." Decatur Beers stared speechless at the apparition before him, his hands fell away from the wheel to his sides and a deathly pallor overspread his weathered features.

"What did you do?" we inquired eagerly, as John

Deane paused in his narrative of tragic brevity.

"We clinched," was the only answer he would make. So many of John Deane's struggles had been done by himself alone! One by one we went apart to picture the struggle by ourselves. We saw two men close in with deadly grips, saw those herculean arms come together about Decatur Beers, felt the stout ribs buckle

and break under the terrific pressure and pictured the strong man, crushed in a heap, falling to the deck.

Other pictures came to mind; that first time when the boy of fifteen had crushed this same slave-driver in the hold of the self-same schooner; the stormy night when our young skipper, at risk of his own life, rescued the unfortunate seaman from a watery grave; the afternoon on the Liverpool shore, with 'Cate Beers hurled at the feet of the onlooking crowd; and more recently in the Gut of Canso when John Dean spared breaking his opponent's bones and flung him into the sea instead. The work of John Deane's hands we had known and seen many times; yet we could not shut out of mind this last picture,— the sight of Decatur Beers broken at his own wheel, his eyeballs rolled up as lusterless as lead sinkers, that purple tongue protruding idiot-like, the better parts of the man crushed, the beastly exposed in all their coarseness.

The two schooners sailed farther and farther apart under the glow of the long twilight. One skipper was silent, without bitterness in his heart, looking forward to a better to-morrow; the other a broken body, a lost soul, lay gasping piteously through the hard hours of the night, "Air! For God's sake, give me air!"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE WRATH OF THE WINDS

HE episode at Deadman's Rock marked the beginning of the end. Not of Decatur Beers, for more trying ordeals were ahead of him before the fishing season should end. But our luck never was the same thereafter. No favoring breezes followed us on the seas, few sunny days came to draw the mackerel to the surface where they might be taken in larger num-Instead were the constant roar and swirl of wind and storm, and the yeasty breakers always fringing the rocky shores of the Magdalenes. For months John Deane had outrivaled all others on the trail of the mackerel, often in the face of outstanding odds. From this time he was fortune's child no more. Not even his might and skill could prevail against the power of the seas. Often adversity is the true test of the soul; it is in the afternoon that the day's work can best be judged. During the late days of the fishing season John Deane's real nature showed to the best advantage.

The crash of a thunderstorm burst upon us that very night with a suddenness and fury that nearly caught us off our guard. As it was we leaped to the halyards and let the sails come down on the run, tangling down-hauls and halyards in a confused mass and jambing the jaws of the maingaff firmly against the mainmast. Prompt action only saved the schooner from capsizing. A deluge of water fell upon us from the skies. Vivid flashes of lightning leaped out from behind darkened

clouds, blinding us instead of giving help and leaving intense after-images of ropes and canvas in a mass of Ethiopian blackness about the ship. The wind rushed through the rigging in mad career. It tossed the great canvas of the mainsail like a handkerchief over the rail or yanked it unfeelingly from our hands when we attempted to furl it on the long boom. Throughout the night we ran under reefed foresail and jumbo. It was a little after dawn that the anchor was dropped from the prow and the schooner tossed restlessly in the one-sided harbor of Tantinore, on Grindstone island. Other schooners were there, four of the American fleet when we arrived and later in the day the *Harvest Home*.

In the morning of another day the wind shifted and drove the little fleet out of Tantinore harbor. Down we rushed before the tempest of wind to Amherst island. There in the lee of Cow Head we anchored with forty-five fathoms of cable out and rocked out the storm, the wind all the while howling fresh and cold from the north-

west. It died away before the second day.

We skirted the eastern coast northward to Entry and Coffin islands, searching everywhere for schools of mackerel. None was seen, none had been seen since we came to the Magdalenes. Every barrel that we took aboard had been lured from ocean bottom by throwing bait from our deck, then either hooking the mackerel with a jig or setting the seine about the schooner. It was a wearying process, so slow and discouraging. On a day we made eight settings of the seine to be rewarded by thirteen wash-barrels of fish. Good wages for laboring men, to be sure; but there were many lean days as well, when our endeavors were for naught or when stormy seas stifled our ambition to work. A few clear days had followed our flight from Tantinore, which meant workdays of the longest hours. Five or six barrels of mackerel a day was all we could expect now; even at this low rate we dared not risk leaving the grounds for other untried regions.

For a couple of days we fished off the Junks of Pork with six barrels of mackerel to reward our efforts. When night came on we ran inshore and anchored under the lee of the land. At the Magdalenes, we were at liberty to catch mackerel as near to the shore as prudence would dictate, for the islands are not included in the three-mile limit of other Canadian littorals. A southeast wind drove us from the Junks of Pork. Again the schooner fled before the rising gale, this time to the northward around the islands where anchor was cast in Goodwin's Cove.

The gale increased in fury as the hours passed. We salted down the larger seine on deck, took the extra seine-boat aboard the schooner, stripped the second boat clean of everything except the purse-weights, lashed both seines to the deck, put a single reef in the mainsail before furling it on the great boom, took the "bonnet" out of the jib, and cleared the decks of everything that might be swept away by boarding seas. We were stripped for a sea-fight. A dozen vessels were at anchor in the harbor, five of them being American seiners. A double anchor-watch was set but nothing unusual occurred during the night except an increase in the fury of the storm. At nine the next morning under the shifting winds Tom Paris' schooner broke away from her anchorage and had to put to sea. We began to get under way at once. Just as we manned the brakes the Nimbus, too, began to drift; one of the anchor flukes was badly bent when it was hoisted to the rail. Under reefed foresail and jumbo we rushed after Tom Paris to the shelter of Tantinore again. We had made a circuit of the Magdalenes within a week, not from choice but through necessity. And thus were we buffeted about the Magdalenes. With such toil and with such

strife against the elements are the uncertain rewards of

the deep-sea fishermen secured!

When the storm had spent itself the little fleet of seiners hurried out again from the uncertain shelter of Tantinore to resume their business of luring the reluctant mackerel from the ocean's bottom. This time the Harvest Home sailed with the rest of the fleet; during the time we were making the circuit of the Magdalenes the schooner had remained at Tantinore to allow Decatur Beers a chance to recover from the effects of his encounter with the skipper of the Nimbus. We sailed off to Amherst isle once more, content that our new ventures proved as successful as at any other spot around the hostile Magdalenes. For half a week we enjoyed the favor of the god of sunny skies — a happy respite from the uncertainty of the past and, as it proved, a treacherous interlude between the angry passion plays of the primal elements. For the opening of the grand opera season of gales was upon us.

The fishermen of the Gulf will never forget that gale. It fell upon the North Bay with a power and terror that wreaked vengeance upon any unlucky craft that had found no shelter from its merciless wrath. Nothing like it had been seen since the famous "Yankee gale" twenty years before, when the schooners of the American fleet were caught on the northerly coast of Prince Edward Island, a lee shore that afforded little shelter from the hideousness of the storm. The gale that struck the Gulf at this time gave scant warning to the mariners about the islands of the Gulf. The barometer fell fast. A dozen seiners off First Chapel read the warning and scurried away like wild fowl in their flight to the shelter of the breakwater at Souris. One by one they turned East Point safely and entered the two-sided harbor at Souris before the waves rolled high and the oncoming darkness could prevent a safe entrance to the port. Once in the harbor the men lashed their schooners to the wharf with many loops of strong cable, one vessel to another and the whole to the pilings of the wharf to prevent them from being torn away and flung upon the nearby shores. Schooners coming in later anchored under the lee of the breakwater. This was constructed of wooden timbers locked together and anchored with tons of rocks. It ran out five hundred feet from the shore with its farthest end surmounted by a light twenty-five feet above the wave to guide incoming craft safely into the harbor.

No man in Souris slept that night. At the wharves the fishermen kept constant watch of the mooring lines, for the strain upon them increased with the blackness of the night. Ships anchored under the lee of the breakwater were deluged with floods of water before midnight Torrents from the sea struck the protruding wall of wood and burst over it in a constant storm of spray and foam. The wind shrieked in unbridled rage hour upon hour while the rising flood of waves and tide added their deep-toned blows to the confusion that the wind had brought. Fences were blown down, buildings unroofed, trees torn up by their roots. Ships in the harbor lost many of their upper sails, for no skipper in the fleet dared send a man aloft to retrieve a sail once the strong fingers of the wind had pried the canvas from its fastenings. Morning dawned upon a dismantled village and a broken port. At early dawn the giant blows of the pounding sea broke through the middle of the breakwater, ripping out a fifty-foot section and letting in a seething torrent which hurled itself with endless rage through the ragged opening. One schooner barely escaped the wreckage when the wall of wood was torn from its foundations and broken to pieces before it could be driven ashore. One of her crew, a negro, foolishly attempted to place a cable from the schooner about a piling on the breakwater. He was swept before the onrushing floods and hurled into the maelstrom of wreckage in the harbor, so helpless was the strength

of man against the might of the seas and winds.

With the break of day men rushed to the headland half a mile from the harbor to search the seas for schooners less fortunate than theirs in finding a harbor and refuge from the gale. The wind caught them and hurled them back off their feet. They settled down upon their knees to hold their position against the terrific wind or leaned for support against the shoulders of others who were kneeling. Far out across the troubled waters of the bay they caught fleeting glimpses of two schooners which appeared and disappeared from view as they were lost in the trough of the seas or appeared momentarily on the crest of the waves that were everywhere lashed with enveloping sheets of white spray. The onlookers did not know at the time that the two schooners were the Nimbus and the Harvest Home, both from Comberton.

It was a strange fate that drove the two schooners together into the terror of the storm. We had seen the dirty-gray lee-set, the streaked sky and the falling of the barometer. We had had enough of the Magdalenes, too, and there was no desire on the part of either skipper to be blown from one harbor to another in the rising gale. Thus early in the day the schooners were turned from Amherst isle and headed for East Point on Prince Edward Island.

Night overtook us in the midst of the Gulf, a night such as two decades of men had not seen. What a night aboard the two schooners! For months they had been together, each gleaning a rich harvest from the seas. Now they were fighting to ward off the angry wolves of the seas that time after time leaped over the rails of the schooners in their hunt for human prey in the dark-

ness and storm. They fought the elements as only Comberton schooners could, for the night of the wind and wave had no mercy on man or his craft. They were tossed and hurled about at the mercy of the gale, helpless to give one another aid in their helplessness, yet no man was on either schooner whose heart was not gladdened by the companionship of the other crew upon the turbulent waters. The Nimbus took the lead of the other, for her stern was deep in the water and she could beat to windward as the other could not. A lantern was hung to our mainboom, sending its fleck of light through the murkiness of the storm and giving the anxious watchers aboard the Harvest Home the only human hope there was on the wild wastes during those hours of terror.

No man aboard our schooner had known a gale like that. The little schooner was tossed upward time and again by the wind and wave, its bow going high in the air only to plunge downward frightfully into the craters between the waves. Over the starboard and again to port she was hurled with her masts all but touching the waves; but she always came back from the waters. Seas broke over her bows and over the rails alike, sweeping from stem to stern in an irresistible rush. Double life-lines were strung between the fore and aft shrouds and from the mainrigging to the quarter-rail cleats. The seine-boat was lashed anew to the port rail. The dory that we had taken from the Harvest Home in return for ours that was destroyed by her was torn from its lashings by the boarding seas and swept overboard; only the protecting interposition of the main-house saved the two seines, lashed though they were, from a similar fate.

Through every hour of the night John Deane stood at the wheel except when the seas which boarded the schooner swept him more than once into the lee scuppers after breaking his hold at the wheel; it was only the strong rope about his waist that kept him lashed to his place and prevented him from being swept into the seas by the fearful rush of the waters. Part of his crew were above deck with him during half of the night, ready to give help if any were needed, and clinging as best they could to the shrouds or standing rigging or the mainboom. Others of the crew were below in the forecastle or cabin with the gangways closed tight against the floods, reeling about like drunken men, each man clad in his oilskins and wondering to himself how he would look when the waves washed his body ashore, if they should be so kind as to do that instead of batting him back and forth on the bottom sands until they wore him out like driftwood.

So we came through the dreadful night conquerors over elements at their worst. When morning came — that morning had no dawn — there was nothing about us but the raging seas, nothing save the uncertain shore that we thought we saw and the Harvest Home, struggling two miles astern and a long way to leeward. Inwardly every man gave thanks that he had been spared to see the lurid light that followed the black night — for it is against the human grain to be swallowed up at night without knowing where or how it happens. We were still fighting when our schooner was discovered by the anxious watchers on the headland at Souris, fighting for every inch we gained against the wind, fighting from being swamped, fighting to reach Souris harbor which, unknown to us, was only half a harbor now.

Old Bill Spurling crept back from his station at the mainmast where he had remained during the night, crept along the top of the house, holding to the mainboom for support. He yelled down to the skipper from the top of the closed cabin-slide, "How's she heading up, skipper?"

It was a fine thing for Bill Spurling to stay by his captain that night, always at hand if counsel or strong arm was needed, never volunteering a suggestion to the young skipper, or implying by word or gesture that he did not have implicit confidence that the best man to command the *Nimbus* in that gale was the submerged young giant at the wheel.

"We'll go in on a pinch, Bill. Get both anchors ready. Stand by to cut the lashings. Short chain!"

the skipper yelled back at him.

With infinite watchfulness against the seas Bill and his picked crew overhauled short chain and cable alike, secured the anchors so they could be released from the rail by a blow of the ax, and distributed the crew in the bows and at the shortened foresail in preparation for the dash into Souris harbor.

"The seine-boat's gone!" cried one of the men, point-

ing astern to the boat.

Not gone, but broken open by the waves during the night. One of them had ripped open her stern and we were towing a useless hulk.

"Cut the cable and let her go!" called the skipper. The loss of the boat was a great help to the struggling schooner; she kept into the wind better and enabled the skipper to try for the harbor without another tack. We were only a quarter-mile from the breakwater when the skipper rolled the wheel down and turned the bows of the Nimbus straight toward the seething sands of the shore. How she rolled over to port as her stern came into the wind! It was a tense moment but she righted splendidly. Every moment was tense. It would be a miracle to save the schooner from being dashed upon the shore before she could be turned into her anchorage and the anchors get a grip that would hold her in place.

What a harbor to enter! Schooners lining both sides of the wharf four tier deep. Others anchored off the

wharf in every best anchorage. Still others, a forest of masts showing through the spray, holding their ground under the breakwater and giving no chance for an incoming schooner to enter astern of them without grave risk of being beached. In the midst of the mass of ships, where one would need to guide his craft without running others down, was the whirlpool of waters rushing through the opening of the breakwater and driving all vessels from its path. Little wonder that the skippers and old seamen left the headland and rushed to the wharves as John Deane turned the bow of the *Nimbus* toward the breakwater's end.

It was a frightful sight for them, if a grand one. Into every one's life comes some greatest moment. was ours as it was theirs on the wharf who beheld the master mariner handle his schooner that morning. A fleeing schooner, stripped clean for the race, was headed toward shipwreck, or safety; eighteen fishermen, warm and hopeful, to be rescued or drowned, inside two minutes; a young skipper, bareheaded at the wheel, a lifeline about his waist, his keen eye sweeping the harbor for the best course; the veteran Spurling on the house above him motioning with his arms - for nothing could be heard in the roar of the waters - signaling the course down to the man at the wheel; a bunch of men at the bows ready to cut the anchors from the rails; another group in yellow jackets, with faces bleached by the night's sleet, huddled about the foresail halvards. fleeting glimpse only. Then the Nimbus dashed from the clearer waters to bury herself from the view of onlookers in the blinding storm of waves that poured over the breakwater.

The schooner turned sharply inshore at the end of the breakwater, rushing along between the wall of wood on one side and the row of protruding bowsprits on the port side, every one of which seemed to jab into her shrouds as she fled past. When she emerged from the blinding spray she struck a clear space of water, the roaring cataract of brine that poured through the break in the wall. She was heading straight for schooners anchored near the wharf when John Deane whirled the wheel hard down to bring her into the wind before she should ram the other ships. The jumbo came down with a rush, the bow of the schooner turned quickly under the control of the rudder, and just when she was about to drift off before the wind and torrent the two anchors plunged from the rails to grip the bottom and hold the Nimbus in place. And all was over! As John Deane reached down to unfasten the rope from his waist the hoarse cheers of men on the wharf were wafted through the frightful din to his ears. They knew what it meant to save his schooner, to save his men, and to keep the black crêpe from fishermen's homes.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE PASSING OF A SCHOONER

As soon as we could launch the seine-boat we pulled ashore and followed the crowd which had rushed back to the headland after they had made sure of our safe arrival. On the headland the watchers were leaning against the wind, their bodies inclined seaward at a sharp angle. Their faces were turned toward the frothy line of breakers that skirted the shore for half a mile out into the open waters.

"That's the finest thing I ever saw done, skipper," said Captain Miles, stepping forward to greet John

Deane as we came up.

"Didn't believe it could be done, for a fact, John," exclaimed Duncan Cameron, meeting grip with grip that told more than volumes of words. "You've kept many folks at home from being widows or orphans this day,

boy."

"I'm feared there's more to be saved that can't," said another veteran huskily, extending one horny hand to Skipper John and pointing seaward with the other. "That's the tough part of bein' a fisherman — goin' right square onto the rocks and they can't help it more'n if they was babies."

"What's the schooner, skipper, do you know?" asked another of the group. "We can't jest make her out with only a smitch of sail showing and the waves piling

over her so."

"The Harvest Home," answered John Deane, speaking for the first time since he left the Nimbus anchored

in the harbor. He looked at the laboring schooner sharply before he continued. "She left the Magdalenes with us yesterday morning and followed astern of us all night. She was a mile or more to leeward when we ran in here."

"The Harvest Home! Why, that's 'Cate Beers' schooner!" exclaimed another of the men who pressed about the skipper. "It don't seem like Beers would let his schooner get in a tight place like that. 'Tain't like the man."

"You're right, man. Beers ought to know when he's on a lee shore," exclaimed a fellow who had shipped for several seasons with the skipper of the *Harvest Home*.

"'Cate ain't been feelin' tolerably well lately, I've heard," ventured Bill Spurling. "P'raps that has something to do with the handling of the Harvest Home."

At the words John Deane looked intently at Bill. A thought flashed through his mind. He turned to the sea, looking at the schooner for a long time with his hands raised to protect the wind from his eyes.

"She never can make it!" exclaimed Miles, following the course of the schooner closely. "She can't possibly fetch by the ledges off the point there, and she's got

where she can't tack ship, neither."

The crowd agreed with the captain, however loath they were to admit it. The Harvest Home was struggling against too great odds. The tide was setting westward, carrying the schooner inshore rather than off. The waves thundered upon her, smothering her neadway whenever she attempted to turn a little more into the wind and pounding her always toward the white shore line. The wind held from the south, stronger and fiercer than winds for two decades; it headed her off from gaining entrance to the harbor and wedged her constantly closer to the hidden rocks. We caught occa-

sional glimpses of the schooner through the waves and storm, then other floods would wipe her completely from the view, or she would settle away with a deep lurch into a yawning valley. As it proved, the master's hand no longer guided the *Harvest Home*. Decatur Beers had done his last service for her during the long hours of the dreadful night. With the coming of day he left the keeping of the schooner in other hands and went to his berth no longer able to bear up from the pain in his chest.

So the ill-fated schooner lurched and drifted until she no longer could retreat to the wider waters beyond East Point nor make enough headway against the tempest to keep off the lee shore. A half hour before she struck we knew her fate was sealed; for a longer time her crew realized that she was doomed, yet no man among them dared tell the news to the groaning man in the cabin. It made little difference, perhaps, for the schooner was past any help of human hand or mind. She struck on the ledges with a crash that stove in her bows and brought the captain, wild-eyed and cursing, from the cabin.

Then the sea wolves which had waited twelve years for the Harvest Home fell to their feast. The elements of sky and sea alike thundered upon the stricken ship. Gale upon gale answered the shriek of the wind through the rigging like sea gulls flocking to the call of mates that have found prey. Waves that had tossed the schooner high on their crests or rolled her deep in their troughs now broke over her rails unchecked in volume and fury. It seemed as if the gods of the sea were swooping up with unseen, immeasurable hands the deepest waters of the North Bay to hurl them upon the prostrate victim of their wrath.

Meanwhile the group on the headland were helpless

witnesses of the tragedy being enacted before them. There must have been men among them who thought of giving aid to the shipwrecked crew but none except John Deane gave expression to his thoughts; there appeared no way to rescue except by exposing other vessels and lives to a similar fate. When Bill Spurling hinted that possibly Decatur Beers was unable to handle his schooner as the crisis demanded John Deane fell to pondering the matter. His conclusion, reached in short order, was that he, in a measure, was responsible for the perilous plight of the ship-wrecked crew since his hands had brought the skipper of the Harvest Home to his present weakened condition. When the schooner dashed upon the ledges and we no longer could see her for the white breakers that smothered her decks John Deane cried out to the astonishment of all, "Those men must be saved!"

The crowd turned to him eager to undertake any hazard that promised a rescue of the crew without greater risk to the rescuers.

"It can't be done, skipper!" cried Duncan Cameron, earnestly. "It can't be done! God help the poor fellows, for we can't!"

"But they must be saved!" Deane repeated with emphasis, distressed with the others that men were being swallowed up before his very eyes with no helping hand extended toward them.

"Why, it's impossible, captain," I roke in another veteran. "A boat couldn't live in those breakers a minute, even if you should be able to launch one."

"Save them from the other side!" cried John Deane.

"Save them with a ship."

"A ship, man! No ship can live out there! Look at that one now on the rocks! How much better off would another one be?" argued Cameron.

"They can be saved! They must be! I've got to

get him, I tell you. A ship can live out there if she's handled right," exclaimed the skipper, turning earnestly to the men about him.

"'Twould be crazy to risk a ship and crew to try to pick off those men, skipper. Half of them will be gone before a ship could get to them," exclaimed Bill Spurling, entering into the conversation with an eagerness that showed only too clearly his purpose to head off John Deane from an undertaking that would add calamity to calamity. John Deane was immovable; he could see no danger, he thought only of the rescue. Once he had decided that a project should be done all other considerations ceased. It ought to be done, therefore it could be done, was the beginning and end of his philosophy.

"I'm going to save those men," he answered almost bitterly, looking with straining eyes toward the wreck.

"I've got to get him."

"You're a crazy loon if you risk your life for that dog out there," I replied, pointing to the wreck of Decatur Beers' schooner.

On the instant John Deane clapped his hand over my mouth, shoving me backward to the ground. Then without further words he turned from the crowd and hastened back toward the wharf. I caught the look of his gleaming eye as I scrambled to my feet, humiliated and angry at the unexpected rebuff; yet I was close on his heels when he put off in the seine-boat to board the Nimbus. Others had followed him to the wharf and volunteered eagerly to go with him, if their help was needed.

"Thank you, men," he replied. "That's fine of you

to offer but I'm sure my crew will be enough."

What a master of men was this master mariner!

No question in his mind how his crew would respond, although many of them had wives and children who needed their services fully as much, perhaps, as the un-

fortunate crew of Decatur Beers. They counted that the great event in their lives, to have it said that they had gone with John Deane when he risked ship and crew alike for the captain and crew of the *Harvest Home*. It is the big thing in life that draws men out of themselves into the lives of their fellows.

We had come in harbor through a cloud of driven spray from the breakwater, we went out much slower against the spray and wind and seas. Lucky for us that the Nimbus had a hundred odd barrels of mackerel in the mainhold. They were the product of the long Magdalene days when every barrel had been almost literally "hand picked." Now they served the schooner to a good purpose since she was trimmed properly for beating to windward. The wind, too had checked to the westward a couple of points since our arrival which made our exit against greater odds. But John Deane

knew his schooner and he expected success.

It is by expecting much that much is accomplished. When John Deane had reached the headland overlooking the sea and witnessed the ill-fated Comberton schooner driven helplessly on the rocks the impulse arose in him to go to their rescue. We cannot fathom human passions and inclinations; they are born in the stress of circumstances. Why should he, of all the veteran seaman on the Souris headland, take so great a risk? thought never entered his mind that this captain and his endangered crew had been hounding his steps for weeks, that they had destroyed his boats, scattered his schools of mackerel, misrepresented him to the officials of a foreign government, even boarded his schooner by treachery to seize her, and, as a last act, used this very broken vessel as an instrument which came near causing his own death. The men clinging helpless to the rigging of the Harvest Home were human beings, they were fishermen like himself and his own crew. A half score of his fellow townsmen were in the shaking shrouds, praying to be delivered as he and his crew had been delivered. They had followed his light throughout the night. Was he, in whom they had trusted as a guide, to prove a false prophet and lure their ship on the ledges and themselves to death? They were yearning for a chance to return to wives and little children — now perilously on the verge of becoming widows and orphans — wives and children whom John Deane had known for years in Comberton. The wharves of Comberton never again would have a charm for him, if he returned to the Latona river without attempting the rescue of Decatur Beers

and his crew. This was his job and his alone.

Once the Nimbus was clear of the Souris breakwater the run down to the ship on the rocks was done easily and quickly. No time to be wasted, though, for the Harvest Home was fast breaking up. She rested on the ledges, her port side exposed to the full force of the waves, her patch of foresail and jumbo already blown to shreds and the seas pounding down the rails with thunderous blows that knew no ceasing. The men were clustered like yellow hornets in the rigging, seven in the forerigging, four in the mainrigging, Decatur Beers lashed above the port lantern with ropes that his men had placed about him. The seas smothered everything below the rigging in their wild dash over the schooner, while the waves, striking against the sides of the Harvest Home, were flung high into the shrouds as if they were wild animals leaping toward their victims. For an hour the men had hung in the rigging hoping at first for relief, seeing none possible either from the land or the sea, then giving themselves up to their fate which would inevitably come when the masts gave way and plunged the men into the seas. When Death was reaching up from below to drag them into the seas and all hope had been abandoned, when some were crossing themselves and others staring wild-eyed across the seas and wondering how the little boy and girl at home would grow up and how the mother could provide for them all, a man in the upper part of the foremast shrouds shrieked out in the madness of his joy, "A sail! A sail! Coming out of Souris!"

John Deane had made his plans before he left the headland; he had noted the location of the dangerous ledges, the lay of the shore to the eastward and the direction of the wind. As the Nimbus dashed through the seas toward the reef he made careful preparation to effect a speedy rescue. Four men were to go in the seine-boat with him, none of them with families dependent upon them. Bill Spurling was to have command of the schooner, was told what to do even to the detail of finally casting the seine-boat adrift if towing her should endanger the safety of the Nimbus and the others of the crew aboard. In a rush of floods that tumbled over the schooner she was brought into the wind half a thousand feet to the windward of the wreck, the port anchor was let go, the seine-boat drawn alongside to allow John Deane and his four men to get aboard. The men leaped into the boat, several coils of rope were flung aboard, extra oars were placed on the thwarts between the rowers, together with buckets for bailing out the seas that might come into the boat. The boat-painter was made secure to the schooner, cables were fastened to it and the seine-boat was lowered astern toward the wreck of the Harrest Home. Just as it was leaving the side of the Nimbus, without asking leave of John Deane, I leaped into the bow of the boat.

While the seine-boat was nearing the wreck John Deane stripped off his oilclothes, his sou'wester, his boots and his coat. He fastened one end of a coil of rope about his waist, the other to one of the thwarts. This done he gave himself to directing the men at the

oars that the boat should be guided straight toward the schooner. Drifting before the gale was an easy matter for us compared with our experiences as soon as we drew near the wreck and the cable from the schooner held the boat up before the storm. The men at the oars could do little except steer the boat, we were dependent upon the judgment of Bill Spurling aboard the Nimbus to keep us near enough to the wreck to take the men off safely, but not so close as to endanger the boat by striking against the vessel or getting in between the

rigging.

The boat first swung near the mainrigging where four men were clinging to the shrouds. Two of them leaped for the boat while it was still twenty feet from the schooner. Both went beneath the surface. One came up immediately and grasped an oar that I held out to him, for I had scrambled to the stern of the boat where the men would be taken aboard. While the first was being pulled aboard John Deane leaped from the steering deck of the boat into the sea after the second man. He reappeared at the surface shortly clutching a bunch of yellow oilskins and we pulled the two to the seineboat. By this time the boat had swung nearer to the schooner and the remaining two men in the mainrigging leaped into the stern of the boat. By aid of the oars the boat was swung forward toward the fore-shrouds. Two of the rescued men seated themselves at the thwarts of the boat and helped our men with the extra oars that John Deane had provided.

A great wave lifted the seine-boat aloft so that we seemed almost to look into the eyes of the men clinging to the shrouds. Only for a moment; the next, we were racing down a declivity and away from the men who were just on the point of being rescued from their perilous position. It was some minutes before the boat could be placed near the rigging again; water in huge sheets came

over our bows and we had to resort to the buckets to clear the water before we made further ventures at rescuing the men.

Again we swung toward the schooner. Two men leaped toward us in their anxiety, then a third followed. I threw a line over the head and shoulders of one as he came to the surface, John Deane flung himself again into the seas to rescue the others. Both of them grabbed him and but for the stout rope that held him to the seine-boat he would have been dragged with the men below the waters. We pulled heartily on the rope, though, and brought them to the rail where they were dumped into the boat by their own eager shipmates. Skipper John shook the water from his eyes and hair, then stood with muscles tight ready to spring into the seas for the others of the shipwrecked crew. What a man of iron in that hour!

Again two yellow streaks dropped from the shrouds to plunge below the surface and hope to be pulled aboard the boat. One caught hold of a friendly oar, the second clung desperately to the rope that was thrown out to him. Only three men were left in the rigging when the seine-boat was dashed away from the schooner a distance of fifty feet or more by the rough seas. It was hard getting her back into place even though we had eight men at the oars now. When we were hoisted to the top of another great comber the man highest up in the shrouds took a flying leap toward the boat. Down he came with a rush and crash, for the poor fellow struck against the side of the boat with a heavy blow, breaking one of his arms and cutting an ugly wound across his face. He was pulled in, as we slid away again into another trough, and for a time lay senseless in the bottom of the boat. The last two of the crew leaped for the boat when it swung near the submerged shrouds of the Harvest Home. There remained only Decatur Beers, lashed and helpless high up in his

own rigging.

He looked down upon us and cried out so loud that we heard it above the din of the tempest, "Keep off! Save the men!" And he motioned with his arms for the seine-boat to take the rescued members of his crew aboard the schooner. John Deane already had made a remarkable rescue of the shipwrecked men, who loaded his seine-boat heavily in the water. We now saw his wisdom in taking so few of his own crew in the boat to effect the rescue, for the men from the Harvest Home were at the oars ready to pull themselves from the wrecked schooner. We had done enough, I thought, so I shouted in the skipper's ear, "He's right! It's time

to be going back!"

"I must get him," John Deane answered huskily. Pulling his knife from his pocket he held it, with the blade open, between his teeth. Then he leaped from the stern of the boat and swam toward the rigging. great wave overwhelmed him, dragging him down as it swept onward. When the billow had passed we discovered him close by the schooner's side. He reached for the shrouds and barely got hold of the lowest ratline when another sea blotted him from view and buried him ten feet below its surface. Even at that he had climbed higher into the rigging while under water. When the wave passed John Deane was clinging to the shrouds, sleek and wet and powerful as a sea-otter in the wave, the knife still firmly wedged between his teeth. In spite of the waves that struck him repeatedly to break his hold and drive him back he climbed nearer the man above him.

Decatur Beers, with the rope lashed about his chest and his hands clutching at the shrouds, looked down upon the figure emerging from the sea. The dark form below crept upward, one long arm reaching above the other, the white impassionate face and gleaming knife between the teeth adding a strange look to this giant of the seas. Beers, tortured in soul as he was in body, shrieked aloud against the winds and fury of the tempest.

"Keep off! In God's name, let me die with my ves-

sel!"

A huge wave swept over us, driving the boat far away from the schooner's side. When I again looked at the men in the shrouds John Deane was slashing away with his knife, slashing the rope to free Decatur Beers. The ropes parted and fell away into the water. Beers toppled weak and helpless against the young man at his side. The knife ripped again and the rope at John Deane's waist was cut. Then the knife, too, was flung into the sea. He passed the rope about the body of the captain and fastened it securely. He glanced down at us, an anxious look in his face if he ever had one; he watched the waves for a favorable moment, then, to the astonishment of all, he leaped backward into the seething flood with Decatur Beers clasped firmly in his own arms. The two men - Comberton products, rivals, enemies disappeared headforemost in the waves.

It was a long time before they came to the surface and then only as we pulled them against the side of the seine-boat. Decatur Beers' great back came up first, rounded with the strain of the rope. His arms were tightly clasped in front of him holding in their embrace the man who had saved him from the wreck. A crimson streak trickled down John Deane's face and neck from a gash in his head where he had struck a piece of wreckage in the leap from the shrouds into the sea. So it was Decatur Beers, broken though he was, who saved John Deane from the seas. Somewhere between the rigging

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of the Harvest Home and the rail of the seine-boat, in those awful baptismal waters that came near holding two victims, the soul of Decatur Beers was purged of its uncleanness.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE HOME PORT

IME would fail to tell all that happened after the rescue of the crew from the rigging of the Harvest Home; how Bill Spurling had the port cable of the Nimbus cut at the knighthead as soon as he saw the last man hauled into the seine-boat; how he let the Nimbus drift down frightfully near the ledges to allow the seine-boat a chance to pull alongside the schooner without being swamped, as we might have been had our boat been hauled to the schooner against the heavy seas; what a time we had in getting the rescued men aboard the Nimbus while she was scudding by-the-wind, with the seas rolling mountain high all about us; the tense moment when John Deane, with a crimson streak trickling down his face and neck, was carried white and senseless to his berth and Decatur Beers staggered down the companionway after him, tears of grief mingled with salt brine on his weathered face; how Bill Spurling cast off the seine-boat painter, once we were aboard the schooner, and let the boat drift upon the rocks to be broken in pieces; how he held the schooner on tack upon tack until she had cleared the dangerous lee shore and escaped past East Point. There was a volume of story in every hour that we lived in those seas, hours that had best be passed over lightly. Toward evening we neared Port Hawkesbury under double-reefed foresail, without boats of any sort, both seines ripped from their deck lashings and swept away into the sea, our sails all but torn to shreds, and part of our quarter-rail carried

away by the great seas that time after time boarded the schooner.

It was near sunset, with the storm breaking and the clouds in the west driving apart, when John Deane ceased raving and awoke to consciousness. Lew Mills was standing near placing wet cloths on his head as he had done once before in the forecastle of the Harvest Home when the skipper was a mere lad. Decatur Beers, threatened with pleurisy and with all kinds of pain in his chest, and worse ones in his heart, lay moaning and groaning in an adjoining berth while I assisted one of his men in keeping hot cloths on the man's chest. Bill Spurling, rare treasure of the sea, was at the wheel of the Nimbus, guiding her with practiced hand and making all things ready for anchoring in the harbor to get medical assistance for the two captains and the fellow with the broken arm. We were going back to Port Hawkesbury, to the harbor where, everybody knew too well, the Nimbus would be seized by the officials. body had questioned Bill Spurling's decision to do this. John Deane would not have had it otherwise had he been able to give orders; in fact, he had given Bill Spurling his orders, we learned later. And that is how we came back from the great North Bay that had received us so graciously.

There was little need to place the flag in the rigging to show craft in the harbor that the incoming Nimbus was in distress. That was too evident in the broken rails, the disheveled sails and rigging, the decks swept clean of everything and scoured white by the sands of the great North Bay as if they had been holystoned by the crew. When I heard the anchor plunge from the bow and the chain rattle through the hawsepipe I left Decatur Beers to the care of his crew, pulled the ship's papers of the Nimbus from the bottom of my ditty-box, placed them carefully inside my sou'wester which I strapped securely

under my chin, removed my coat and boots, slipped over the rail of the *Nimbus* and swam to the cutter *Beetle* which was anchored under our lee. Immediately after being pulled from the water by the watch aboard the cutter I asked to see the commanding officer. Him I saluted respectfully, although I must have made a sorry looking spectacle from the sea.

"Sir," I said, without further ceremony or introduction, "the men aboard the schooner that has just entered port are greatly in need of medical attendance. You will render an act of mercy by sending aid to them at

once."

How rapidly time changes the relations of men! It was only a week from that stormy day, in the evening, that the Nimbus, with full Comberton crew, set sail from the harbor of Halifax for the wharves of the Latona. Bill Spurling was at the wheel, George Keene was fussing around near him, while Eben Springer, late of the crew of the Harvest Home and always hailing from Comberton, took the great lanterns from Lew Mills' hands and hung them in the rigging. When the schooner had turned its course westward at Cape Sambro and settled upon the course for Cape Sable John Deane descended the companionway stairs to the cabin. He stopped at the door of his own snug stateroom and looked in.

"How are you feeling now, captain?" he inquired of the man lying in the berth.

Decatur Beers suppressed a groan long enough to answer, "Never felt better in my life, skipper."

"Well, good night to you, captain."

"Good night, John."

Old Bill at the wheel, who overheard the conversation, muttered to himself, "It'll take Beers some weeks yet to get over lying."

But John Deane, who understood men better than he, knew that Decatur Beers spoke the truth. They were all homeward bound, all of them in their hearts urging the good ship Nimbus to make a speedy return to the

common port.

Comberton was ready to give royal welcome to her returning fishermen. The gleaners afield and at sea had gathered their harvests for the season. On the farms and at the wharves the fall's work was well in hand. The fields had yielded their burden of hay, adding a generous second-crop of clover, and now lay withering grayer with every night's frost that bit deep into the stubble. All through the October days the birches and poplars on the river banks had been dropping their golden tribute upon the strand at their feet which the restless, greedy tide licked up and bore off triumphantly on its shoulders to be buried in the dark coffers of the ocean's bottom.

The grand-bankers, gray with the scouring of the sea, had returned weeks before from their summer's cruise. When the tide was out they lay quietly upon their sides like cattle resting after a season of toil; but when the flood once more lifted them off the flats the ships would shake their antler-tops high above the trees of the bank and fret and pull at their chains as if impatient to be back at Whale Deep or the Bucksport Shoals battling with the storms of the Grand Bank. Their holds were empty of cargoes. Huge tubs and bulging hogsheads upon the wharf filled with unwashed codfish and a profusion of half-cured fish on the flakes above the banks pointed mutely to the success of Comberton's deep-sea fleet for the season. Ashore men and boys were scrubbing the last of the salt codfish with stiff brushes, or wheeling the green fish in barrows up the steep banks to be spread by skillful hands on the flakes to be cured by the autumn sun and winds. While men were thus rounding out the year's work and getting everything in readiness for the irresistible winter ahead there was in every person's mind a picture of the schooner *Nimbus* bearing her precious cargo of human freight nearer and nearer to the home port.

When the schooner did appear all work at the wharves and the firesides of Comberton ceased. Anxious lookouts at the Point discovered the schooner when she first entered the bay. They carried the glad news quickly to Comberton village. Men left their loads of mussel-bed unspread in the fields and rushed off toward the wharves. Women deserted their ovens and, with young children in their arms or tugging at their skirts, hastened to the shore. At the wharves nearest the mouth of the river the men and boys paused in their work to gaze at the returning schooner carrying its mixed crew from two Comberton vessels. They shouted out glad tidings to this man and that of the crew as the Nimbus sailed slowly past them; then leaving their work in whatever stage it happened to be, youth and adult alike rushed pell-mell across fields and gullies to be at the wharf when the Nimbus should come in. As the schooner continued upstream the demonstration became greater. Flags and ships' colors were flung to the breeze in happy welcome to the little schooner and her Swivels were loaded on the deck and wharves; as the schooner passed by the boom of cannon was added to the din of shouting and acclamations that greeted the return of John Deane's vessel.

The landing wharf was black with the crowd. Fishermen and fishermen's families were there to welcome the men back to Comberton. It would be difficult to tell in whom the greatest interest centered, in those who had been saved from shipwreck and death or in others who had risked their lives to bring other Comberton fishermen back to a common port. Fathers and mothers,

bent with the toil of years, stood clasping each other's hands as they waited for another look into the face of a fisherman-son who had clung for hours to the rigging of the Harvest Home. Wives were there with little children in an anguish of joy at the home coming of him who meant everything to the home circle. Young maidens, whose happy fate had depended upon the successful outcome of this season's fishing, were waiting to cling to these rough men of the sea. Every one of the returning crew had some relative waiting on the wharf, waiting and yearning for the return of Comberton men and youth. Every one of them except John Deane, the one man whom Comberton could thank that day for inexpressible joy in place of untold grief.

Even Decatur Beers! For in the center of the group that pressed to the edge of the wharf was his mother. A faded Paisley shawl, which her son had brought back from his first voyage across the seas a score of years before, was drawn across her shoulders and held tightly in front. Her face was kindly, wistful, anxious,— for word had been sent from Port Hawkesbury that her son had passed through great distress and was still a very sick man. People who pressed close to the edge of the wharf did not forget how anxious she was and they protected her from the crowd that pushed from every

side.

Strangely there was neither noise nor demonstration from those upon the wharf. The schooner circled toward the opposite shore and approached the wharf headed downstream against the tide. The people watched the young man at the wheel turn the schooner neatly about. Their heart strings pulled too tightly to allow words of greeting to escape their lips. Hands were waved quietly, eyes on the wharf met others on the schooner in quick, frantic welcome before they filled with tears. The side of the schooner rubbed against the

front of the wharf, loops of cable were tossed up to the men on the wharf, and the schooner Nimbus, returning

from her memorable cruise, was at home.

Comberton folk marveled at the miracle enacted before them. Decatur Beers, haggard as they had never known the man, was resting against the house. It was John Deane who took hold of his arm and assisted him over the rail to the wharf. The broken captain took his white-haired mother in his arms and kissed her upon the cheeks. The little woman, overcome with exceeding great joy, could only extend her hand in thankfulness to the young skipper. After that, there was a scene of the wildest joy and greatest weeping that Comberton ever knew, and nobody cared who saw the tears or the expressions of happiness.

CHAPTER XXX

FURLING THE SAILS

OMBERTON'S reception to her returning sea kings did not end with the welcome at the water-That was only preliminary to greater expressions of gratitude that their men had been safely delivered from the sea. Word had reached them telling of the wreck of the Harvest Home and the serious illness of Decatur Beers. This news was followed almost immediately by a telegram announcing the seizure of the Nimbus by Canadian officials and of her departure for Halifax where the hearing would be conducted. Comberton knew that upon receipt of the news Seth Hinds had not let a moment pass in his endeavors to be present at the trial, and nobody thought for an instant that his presence in Halifax would be helpful to John Deane's cause. A few days later a laconic dispatch from John Deane stated that the Nimbus was about to set sail for home with full Comberton crew, including Decatur Beers and his Comberton men. Indeed, it would have been most surprising if there had been anything but the full tide of humanity lining the banks of the Latona when the Nimbus sailed into port.

Never before in the history of the town had speculation stalked abroad with so great latitude and longitude as in the three days preceding the arrival of the schooner. For Comberton knew little of what had happened, or how it had happened, or why the crews of rival schooners should be returning aboard the same craft. Something eventful had happened, that was certain; it was enough to set speculation busy like the arms of an

octopus feeling for food to satisfy its hunger. The women of the village had done their part toward welcoming the returning veterans of the sea by preparing a dinner at the town hall, where everybody would have a chance to meet everybody else and all could hear the news that Comberton's ears were itching to hear. So it was not strange that within three hours after the Nimbus tied up at the wharf the townspeople were gathered at the hall and the heroes, like Ulysses and his faithful crew, were seated at the groaning tables.

It was a feast worthy to be spread before Vikings returning from a plunder cruise to the southland regions, except that in this case the returning sea-dogs had been guilty of pillaging nothing more serious than the depths of the ocean. The hall was in an uproar of noise, merriment and busyness. Nobody attempted to hear beyond his third neighbor, or to apologize for running into somebody else, or to wait his turn to talk; for in that assembly one had to talk or eat as opportunity was given. The matrons contentedly carved food at the sidetables with their backs to the crowd while the young maidens hurried away to wait upon their favorites at the tables. When the crews of the Nimbus and the Harvest Home confronted deckloads of food provided so bountifully before them and felt the near presence of their women folks they knew indeed that they had reached the home port.

After there had been a wonderful consumption of edibles such as even these hearty folk had never before thought possible the tables were cleared, the noise gradually subsided and the men tipped back in their chairs to enjoy cigars which had been provided for the momentous occasion by the foresight of the selectmen. One thought was uppermost in the minds of all — who would be the winner of Seth Hinds' thousand-dollar prize

for the record catch of the season?

On this point public opinion was unanimous who the winner should be. The people were impatient, also, to learn at first hand what had happened after the arrival of the Nimbus at Port Hawkesbury. Instinctively they turned to Bill Spurling for the information. Everybody knew that Bill had a way of seeing rather clearly whatever happened and of talking about things without mincing of words. He had had a part in much that had taken place, too, and it required but a little urging from his neighbors for him to set the events before them. Omitting all reference to his own valuable work, especially in handling the Nimbus and saving her from a perilous situation, Bill began with the anchoring of the schooner in the harbor at Hawkesbury.

"No sooner had the anchor splashed into the water," Bill went on after a brief introduction to his theme. "than I heard another splash. Somebody hollered out 'Man overboard!' but when I looked I see they was mistaken; it was only Pitch Graham swimming away to the cutter. It was just like Pitch to do that, for the cutter's boat put off in a minute or so bringing the ship's surgeon to take care of our sick men. But when another boat followed hard in her wake it brought the commander who seized the schooner. Then the jig was up, as everybody knew it would be when we left Souris break-

water.

"Well, after that they took us to Halifax to try the schooner and we all allowed we'd go along, too; it would be getting us just so much nearer home and besides we could get our mug-ups out of Lew Mills' forecastle instead of paying some boardinghouse folks. It was worth the price of being captured to be in Halifax when the trial was on. All the people there gave us the glad hand and were sorry we'd been taken by the officials. You see they'd heard all about John Deane and how he saved Decatur Beers and his crew from the shrouds of

the Harvest Home. Under the circumstances they knew he wasn't deserving to have his schooner seized; but law

is law and must be obeyed.

"When the trial came off the courtroom was packed with Blue Noses, anxious to hear every word that was said but mostly wanting to get a look at our skipper. When they got right down to business there wasn't much to be said. The government witnesses, when they took the stand, couldn't swear that the schooner had been violating the law when she was first taken off Liverpool, except as they said Captain Beers had told them she was. Of course that wasn't very good testimony in court and most everybody thought the officers didn't want John Deane's schooner condemned any more than the crowd Finally Skipper John and five of us fellows told our story which jibed with each other's all right and all was to the same effect that the schooner took the fish 'way outside the three-mile limit. So there was a onesided case and the chief skipper of the courtroom was ready to dismiss us with his blessing when old Seth Hinds piped up from the back of the room and asked why they didn't call in Captain Decatur Beers to give his testimony, seeing as he was in the city. So they dragged 'Cate out of his sick bed and brought him into court to testify against John Deane."

Bill stopped long enough in his narrative to allow the effect of Seth Hinds' action to sink into the minds of his

hearers before continuing further.

"When 'Cate Beers came in he was as pale as a shark's belly. The room was still as death while he was making his way up front and getting settled in a big chair that was brought out for him, for he was powerful sick. They were stiller'n death while he talked, for Decatur Beers turned his briny soul inside out right before the whole of us like he would his woolen sock if he was mending it up. The judge looked at Beers, who

didn't look at anybody, and told him what had been said before he came in, especially that the government witnesses had said as how Beers had told them the *Nimbus* was fishing inside the limit when she took her fish.

"'What have you got to say in that respect, sir?'

the magistrate said to Beers.

"Beers squared himself around facing the judge and

said, 'It's a lie, sir!'

"Everybody in the room held his breath to hear what he had to say. The judge bent forward toward him and asked again, 'What is a lie?'

"'What I told the officer is a lie! Everything that

I have said about it is a lie, sir.'

- "He pressed his hands against his breast as if it hurt him to talk. He was awfully white and I thought to goodness he would up and die right before us. The judge kept on with his questions, trying to find out just how blue a liar Decatur was; but he didn't get much satisfaction in the end.
- "'You mean to say that you lied to the officer about the *Nimbus* and have lied about her seizure ever since?' he went on.
 - "'Yes, sir,' he answered, without turning his head.
- "'You admit that you are a liar?' questioned the judge.

"'I am, sir,' Beers answered.

- "'Then how do we know that you are not lying now?'
- "'What? What is that, sir? Do you doubt my word?' Beers said, biting off his words and turning sharply upon the magistrate. He was the Decatur Beers of old in a minute,— afire in a minute when his word was doubted. His eye flashed like he wanted to fight the judge. The officer was taken back by Beers' answer and went on in a quieter tone, 'You will under-

stand, Captain Beers, how difficult it is for us to know just what your testimony is worth since, on your own testimony, you admit that you are a liar.'

"'But you don't understand that things are differ-

ent now,' the captain protested.

- "'Yes, we understand. Only a week ago you and your crew were saved from shipwreck by the captain of the *Nimbus*. It is only natural that you should feel different toward him now.'
- "'But I didn't want him to rescue me,' Beers declared.

"'Captain Deane did rescue you, didn't he?' asked

the judge.

- "'No! no!' he cried out, clutching hold of both arms of his chair with his hands. 'No, John Deane didn't rescue me. I wasn't rescued. I was saved!'
- "'Saved?' said the judge. 'What do you mean? What is the difference?'

"'Oh, you don't understand the difference, sir, as I told you before,' replied the sick man, still clutching at his chair arms and staring across the room as if he was in the shrouds again off Souris breakwater. You could hear his whisper to the outside door, the room was so quiet. He went on and told his story, the strangest that I ever heard from the lips of man. I'm going to tell it to you in his own words so you'll understand; but you can't realize it as we can since you were not in the court room."

Bill Spurling had no need to invite his audience to attention. Comberton's epic was being recited by a narrator of Homeric mold. Bill put himself in Beers' place and imitated with voice and look and gesture the tense scene in the Halifax courthouse in a manner that made his neighbors see the trembling captain of the Harvest Home open his soul to the world.

"Decatur Beers pressed his hands hard against his chest and went on, talking to nobody in particular, just

unfolding himself in a pitiful, grand manner.

"'John Deane did rescue this poor hulk of bones from the rigging; that was the most daring thing I ever saw done. No one but him could have done it. But it wasn't worth the risk. My body was broken then, and I didn't have no soul that could be called one. I sold that years ago to the Devil. I hadn't had no soul since Seth Hinds got hold of me ten years or more ago. I sold my soul to get a schooner but that was always out of my reach. Hinds looked out for that.

"'Six years ago,' he went on, straightening up in his chair with an effort, 'six years ago Seth Hinds gave me orders about John Deane. He was only a boy then — fifteen — I believe. Hinds had jest knocked the boy senseless on my own deck and he said, "Break him, curse him, break him!" That was a wicked summer for me. I was nothing short of bein' a human hellyun to the boy for weeks until one day he turned on me and come near ending me. I never blamed him for it, though.

"'Somehow, he's the kind you can't break. He's fought his way against some awful things that's been done to him. It seems like he's more than human. This year when I got home from the Magdalenes Seth Hinds told me to get him, whatever it cost. An' I've paid the full price. I lied about him to the cutter's officer at Liverpool. I set the officer on him at Aspey Bay and left the fishin' grounds to help chase his schooner. But he got away to Gloucester. While I was aboard the cutter at Cow Bay I stole the papers of the Nimbus from the commander's cabin and took them to Seth Hinds at Comberton. I hounded the Nimbus and her skipper day and night, but never without paying my price. Finally off Deadman's Rock I ran John Deane down in his dory. I didn't intend to do that. I thought I'd

drowned him, only to have his ghost walk out of the waves and —'

"Beers stopped for a time. It was hard to see him and listen to his story. By and by he got hold of him-

self again and went on.

"'Oh, God, what an awful price I paid then! Ten thousand deaths would be welcome to get free from the clutches of the dead spirit that crushed me into this helpless state!'

"The man cried out in anguish as he lived again those terrifying moments. The audience stared wild-eyed at

the sight of him.

"'Then there came that awful day on the wreck.' He went on with husky voice, his eyes staring before him, and one hand groping out into the air as if he was

writing the story there.

"'I had paid the uttermost farthing — lost my soul, lost my schooner, lost five of my good men. Then he came — came like a god out of the sea and rescued my men from the rigging and the sea. Nothing could stop him. It was awful to look down and see him conquer everything, then plunge into the waters and pull the poor wretches back to life. The men were all rescued. Then I was ready to go down with my ship. Oh, it would be hell to live after that, to be pulled off the riggin' by him that I had wronged for years. I cried out for him to take the men aboard the schooner and let me die.

"'Hell never will have terrors for me after living through those minutes. He leaped in the sea that would drown any other man and climbed up after me. That knife! That knife between his teeth was going into my worthless heart with every ratline that he climbed! Oh, God, how I suffered! I never thought of going that way before.'

"Then Beers stopped again. He looked so differ-

ent and peaceful like. The pain left his eyes and he

turned to the magistrate when he spoke again.

"'He did not strike me. John Deane never struck any man a blow with his fist. He cut the cords that bound me. Then he took me in his arms, useless and helpless as I was, and leaped backward into the sea to give me the best chance in the water. I wasn't rescued. I was saved! I tell you, man, I met the Christ down there. He saved me from the seas and from myself and has brought me here to be a witness to help right the wrongs that I've done to John Deane. And that's why it is different now, sir.'

"When Decatur Beers got through testifying I felt like shouting right out loud in meeting and telling him that it didn't matter so much whether the Nimbus was condemned or not so long as he had cleared himself of his past — and that's how we all felt about it. The magistrate felt as we did, for after 'Cate got through talking he said he guessed the government didn't have any charge against the schooner and that the business of the

day was over.

"Then Seth Hinds popped up again all a-frothing at the mouth and hollered out without being polite to anybody, 'How about that other charge of sailing the

schooner without her papers?'

"The court was all took aback to have somebody bring this to his attention; but it was too late to mend matters and all Halifax knowing about it. He made the best of a bad matter by saying, 'We have no evidence that the schooner was being sailed without her papers.'

"'But I have,' shouted Seth Hinds, pushing up to the front. He pulled a yaller envelope out of his pocket

and shook it in the air.

"'Them's the papers of the schooner Nimbus, sir, and she's been sailing the seas these two months without

any papers at all. She's a pirate craft. She's been legally seized and I claim the reward that your government offered. It goes to the man that holds the ship's papers,' cried Hinds, just like that." And Bill imitated the voice and gesture of the well known Comberton character in a manner that set the audience in

roars of laughter.

"It was worth a cargo of Magdalene herring to be there when Seth Hinds opened his envelope. I had seen the revenue officer bite on the same bait and seen Captain Beers do the same thing but seeing Seth Hinds rip open the envelope with his big forefinger and pull out one of his own bill-heads was beyond human description. He stood there a-gaping at the thing like it was a ghost, getting redder and redder all the time and the people looking on and wondering what had happened until finally they began to smell a rat. Then that Pitch he called out from back in the crowd, 'You must have swiped the wrong paper from your captain, Mr. Hinds,' meaning as how Hinds had stole the papers from Beers. The young rascal come up front and laid the real papers of the Nimbus on the table in front of the magistrate where everybody could see them and feel of them and read them, and they was the real papers, too. It was all a mystery to Seth Hinds and John Deane and his crew and everybody except me and Pitch.

"After they had looked the papers over for a time Pitch says to the magistrate in his slickest manner, 'And now, sir, if you are convinced that the schooner Nimbus was seized and that I hold the ship's papers, at your convenience, sir, I should like to receive the reward offered by your government and another offered by a public

spirited personage.'

"The magistrate consulted with his advisers before he answered. It was evident to them that the schooner had been cleared of both charges; also, that the rewards offered for her seizure were valid even if she had not been condemned. Finally he held two envelopes out toward Pitch. The youngster opened up the government document first and pulled out a voucher drawn for five thousand dollars. He took a glance at it, then shoved it into his coat pocket as if it had been any ordinary bit of paper. When he opened the other envelope he spread the contents out before him in front of all the folks looking on; it didn't seem a very modest thing to me but then you can't ever predict how his mackerel will school, except that they will come to the surface in due time.

"Well, Pitch stood there with legs spread out as if he was on the quarter in a gale of wind and read aloud to

us while we listened with all our ears.

"'I promise to pay the sum of five thousand dollars as a reward to the person or persons who delivers the schooner Nimbus, Captain John Deane, into the hands of the Canadian government for violating the treaty rights of that government. (Signed) Seth Hinds.'

"There was some excitement among us when we learned that our own neighbor had been plotting to have our schooner seized by offering a big reward for the doing of it. A postscript said as how the reward would go to the one who had the ship's papers in his possession when the ship was seized. You see, Hinds knew when he wrote that note where the papers were and he hoped to get the reward himself. But for Pitch here he would have, too. Oh, Pitch ain't so woolly that he bleats, yet.

"After Pitch had read the note through in his drawly way he looked up at Seth Hinds as pleasant as a sunfish and said, 'Captain, this five thousand stays in my jeans, too. Recollect, captain, what happened to me one foggy night half a dozen summers ago? Well, Neighbor

Hinds, it will cost you just about ten dollars a minute for the time you kept me muzzled with that herring-stick of yours!' Then there was a mighty shout in the courtroom and everybody scrambled to shake hands with Pitch and John Deane — and some of the rest of us, too.

"When we got away from Halifax Pitch explained to Skipper John all about the ship's papers and how he happened to have them. He pulled out his ten thousand dollars and placed five thousand of it in Skipper John's hands. But John Deane wouldn't listen to it for a minute. He said he had his schooner and his year's work; with the way things had come out — meaning Decatur Beers — he was the happiest and contentedest man in the world.

"So our friend Pitch has got the nifty sum of ten thousand dollars on his person to get educated on, besides a couple hundred more he got from the seine-boat and several hundred from his summer's work. Brains will tell, friends. Pitch has got them and had rather use them any day than his hands. We rated him a full share this season and I guess he deserved it. But why on earth he wants to spend his money for a college education is beyond me."

Bill's narrative was received with generous applause both for his satisfactory explanation of events that had taken place and also for his realistic manner of telling about them. Immediately following the handclapping and shouts of approval that the veteran seaman had provoked, the people called for the selectmen to announce their decision. "The prize! the prize! John Deane! The prize!" came from all quarters of the hall until there was such a din that there could have been no announcement had one been prepared. The calls from the expectant crowd showed clearly that they needed little assistance from the judges to confirm their belief that

the skipper of the Nimbus and the prize were insepar-

ably linked together.

It had been the purpose of the first selectman to make a lengthy speech, in which he would set forth the importance of the fisheries to Comberton, the interest that everybody had taken in the events of the summer at sea, and the wish that in some way the fisheries could be stimulated in like manner in years to come. But as he listened to the narrative of Bill Spurling he had reason to change his mind about the desirability of again having a prize set before his fellow fishermen. He could not omit reference to the exciting events that had taken place during the previous ten days, as he should not. After brief introductory remarks the chairman of the board of selectmen announced the decision of the board regarding the prize offered by Seth Hinds.

"There have been losses and disappointments this year," he said, "but, on the whole, we have prospered and been blessed. The good old schooner Harvest Home has sailed her last voyage but we are thankful that Comberton didn't lose more than a schooner. None of our neighbors was lost — some of them have been saved as you know. When it comes to saying who's the best man out of Comberton I take my hat off to one man, the same as you do. But it is not my business here to praise folks. You want to know what decision your board of selectmen has made. We have all agreed that the thousand-dollar reward to be given to the skipper who has taken the most valuable treasure from the

seas this season belongs to -"

Here the speaker paused while his listeners breathlessly waited for him to pronounce the name of John Deane. He looked down at the table for a moment, then slowly squared himself about facing the crowded hall.

[&]quot;The reward belongs to Captain Decatur Beers!"

On the instant the audience was ready to protest what appeared a most unjust decision, certainly an unpopular one. The swift after-thought in the minds of all, however, was quick to repress the involuntary messages that were pressing on their lips for expression; it held them in leash until an explanation of the decision was given. At another time the speaker would have been mobbed, for all through the summer and fall months Comberton had been expecting John Deane to be winner. Now they recalled the picture at the wharf, still fresh in their minds, of Decatur Beers returning to his home port a different man than when he had set forth and John Deane assisting the broken captain to his mother's side. They knew that Beers had lost most of his worldly goods when the Harvest Home broke in pieces on the rocks; it came to them that Beers and his mother that very moment were seated before the open fireplace in their lowroofed cottage and that the gray-haired lady was ministering to her son's wants only as a mother can. Then the people understood without being told that John Deane had had some part in awarding the prize. They sensed his influence with the selectmen,- this young man whom they had come to regard mountain-high above themselves in the really great things of life. is why nobody in the audience, however disappointed when the decision of the selectmen was announced, cried out against it.

"Some of you may be surprised at the decision," the speaker went on, attempting to be unmoved by the strong feeling that was struggling within him, "but when you recall that it was Decatur Beers who pulled John Deane from out of the waters of the wreck you will agree with your selectmen, I am sure, that he saved a treasure greater than any fare of codfish or catch of mackerel."

He could get no farther. The crowd burst into cheers and cries and handclappings that told only too well how

they approved the decision of the board that befitted the occasion so admirably — for no man after that held any bitterness in his heart against the skipper of the *Harvest Home*. If John Deane could forgive, they at least could

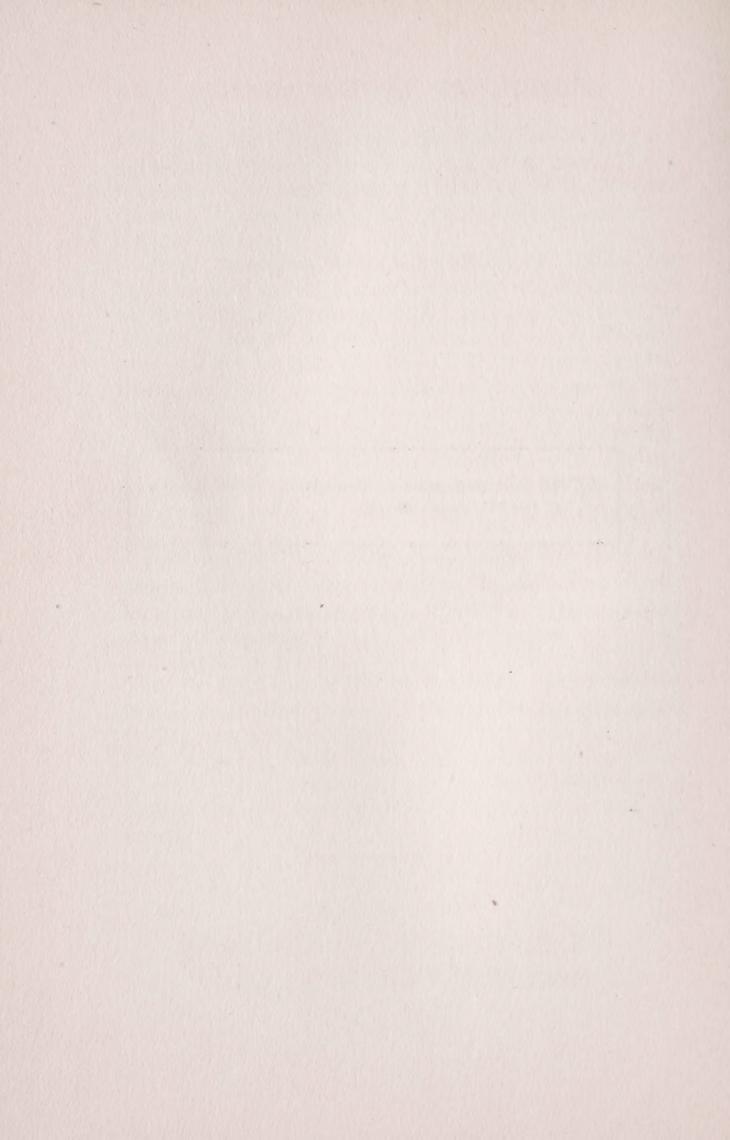
approve his act.

That is about all there is to the story. When the applause had subsided somebody inquired who was going to take the thousand-dollar check over to Decatur Beers. "Aunt" Susan Condon called out, "Whoever goes has got to take this basket of food over to Mrs. Beers, too," for the good women of the village had not forgotten any people of the community who were unable to be present on that memorable afternoon. Then Bill, who always was old womanish enough to want the last word, said, "I move that John Deane take the basket of food and that Velmy Brandon go along with the thousand dollars."

So it was voted by everybody excepting the two young people who were commissioned to do the errand. We watched the fairest maiden of the town and this young man — the strongest frame and the biggest heart that ever put forth from the wharves of Comberton — walk down the road sharing the burden of the basket between them. At the doorstep of the little cottage they stopped to chat together for a moment and, with their heads very close together, to look at the thousand-dollar note. Then they disappeared through the door, bearing good tidings and great cheer to the happy mother and son within.

THE END

THE following pages contain advertisements of a few of the Macmillan novels.



Joan and Peter

BY H. G. WELLS

With frontispiece. Cloth, 12mo

Mr. Wells calls his new novel "The Story of An Education"; the education of two unusually interesting young people whose lives touch many of the most (revolutionary) radical and artistic movements in English life during the last two decades. In the study of the characters of Joan and Peter, Mr. Wells has done some of his finest, most revealing and brilliant work. It is reminiscent in manner of The New Machiavelli, which is to say that it does for the subject of education what The New Machiavelli does in the field of politics.

Every one read and discussed that former work; it is more than likely that *Joan and Peter* will find equally wide reading.

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY Publishers 64-66 Fifth Avenue New York

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By WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

Author of The Martial Adventures of Henry and Me, A Certain Rich Man, The Court of Boyville, etc.

\$1.60

It was nine years ago that A Certain Rich Man was published, and in all the time that has intervened, thousands of people who read that book have been looking for its successor. In the Heart of a Fool comes at last as the gratifying response to this long expressed demand.

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Mr. Phillpotts' work is always thoughtful and sincere and goes beneath the surface of things. His new novel, as in the case of *Brunel's Tower* and several other of his later writings, takes one of the big industries as its background, and tells against

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Essentially, it is a study of hatred; it centers about the deep, inborn hatred of a boy for his father, who had refused to marry his mother after he had promised her to do so, really because he had come into a large property and did not think the working girl the right wife for him, although he tries to persuade himself that it is because of his philosophic views on marriage.

The climax which the tale reaches is vivid and powerful. Altogether the work is one which bears out Phillpotts' reputation

for sustained and beautiful work.

A NOVEL BY ZOË BECKLEY

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By ZOË BECKLEY

With illustrations

It is not the story of the exceptional girl that Miss Beckley tells in this book; the average young woman of to-day with normal instincts and ambitions is her central figure. Annie Hargan, daughter of the tenements, has a great deal of trouble in making enough money to live on. The problem is one which she alone can solve as there is no one who can help her, with the possible exception of Aunt "Moggie" who can only contribute a very little now and then. The story of Annie's experiences, first in the factory, later as switchboard operator and typist, is related with real power and insight. Equally appealing are those later days when love comes into Annie's life and she decides to cast her lot in with "Bernie's." Their marriage starts off happily, but something happens and they almost drink the bitter dregs of despair. They are saved from that by a common interest—a vision which they both have and which wonderfully materializes.

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Barbara Picks a Husband

By HERMANN HAGEDORN

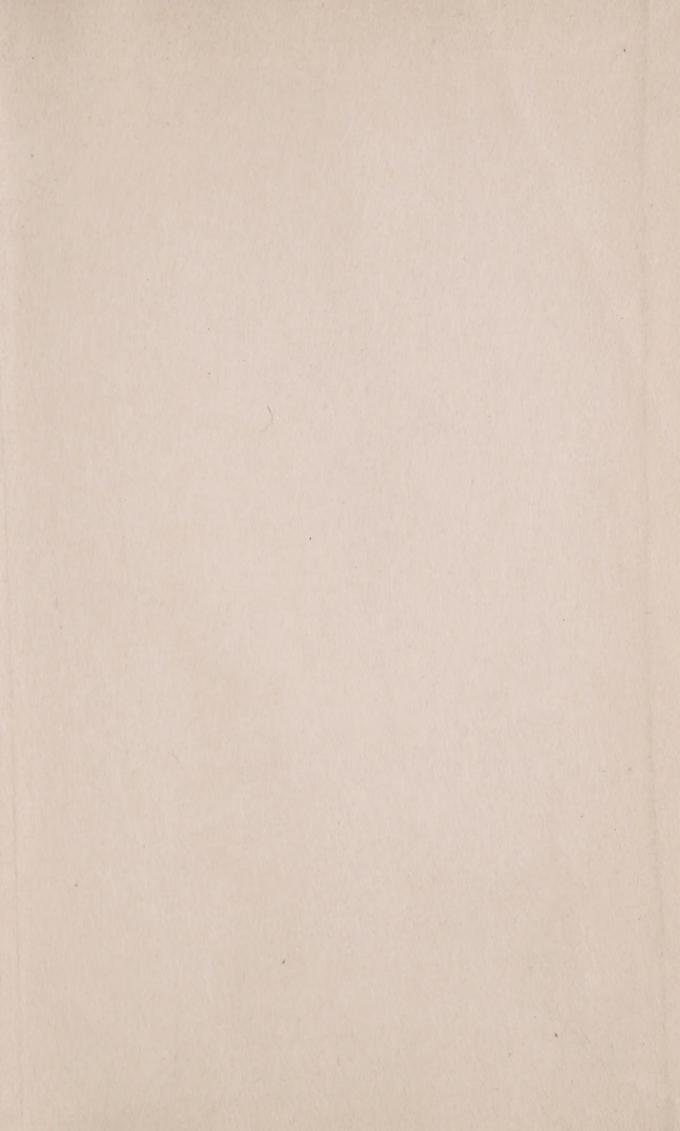
Author of The Great Maze — The Heart of Youth, Faces in the Dawn, You Are the Hope of the World, etc. With Frontispiece by J. Paul Verees

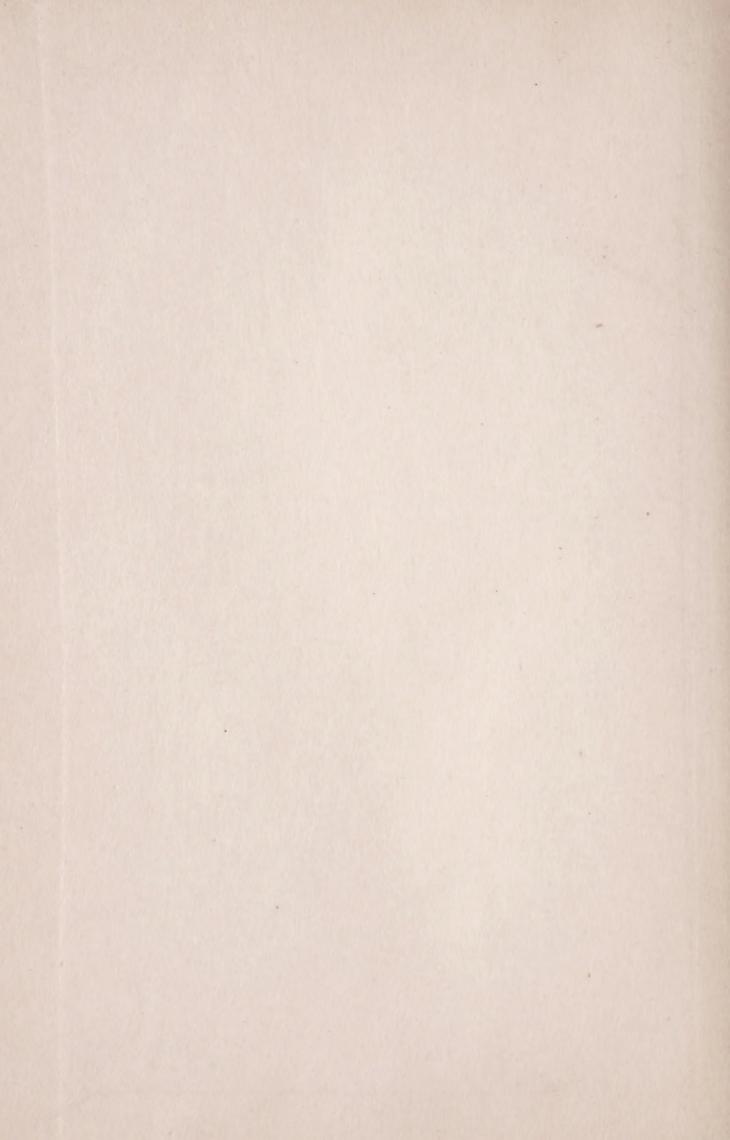
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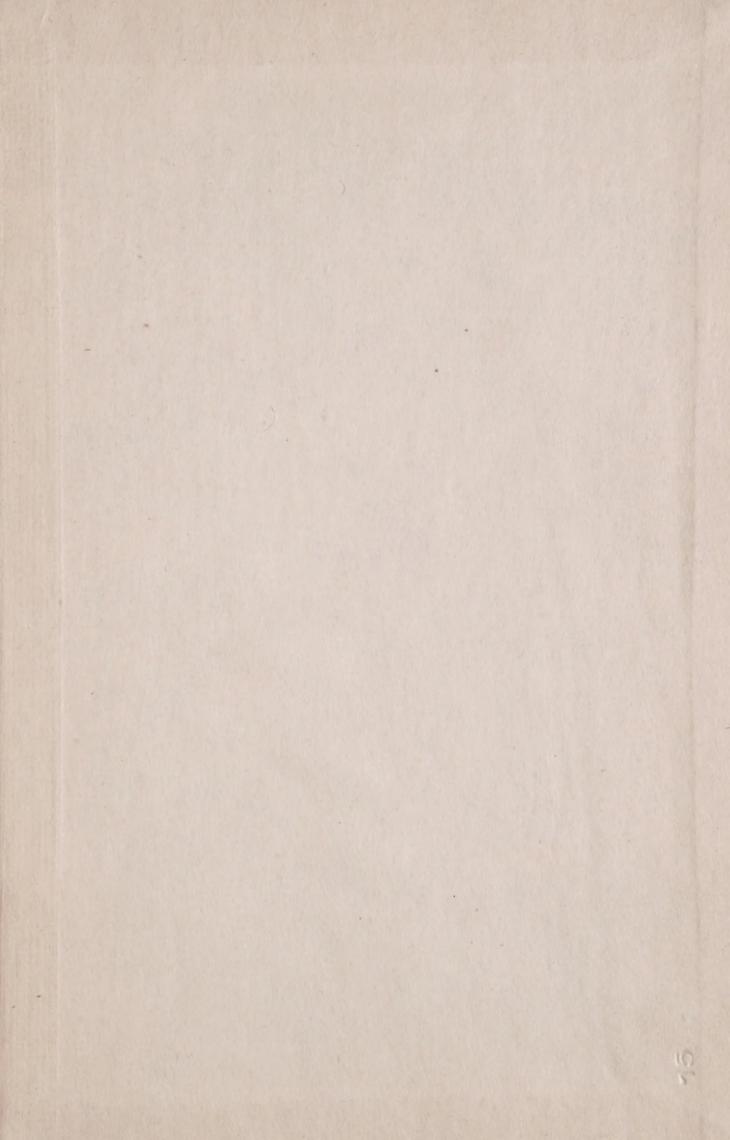
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